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OF TECUMSEH
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THE WARD OF TECUMSEH

By CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

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ALAGWA COMES TO THE COUNCIL FIRE

THE WARD OF TECUMSEH

BY

CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

AUTHOR OF "SALLY CASTLETON, SOUTHERNER," "THE ISLE OF DEAD SHIPS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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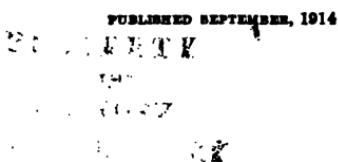
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THE WARD OF TECUMSEH

CHAPTER I

WHEN the beautiful Sally Habersham accepted Dick Ogilvie her girl associates rejoiced quite as much as she did, foreseeing the return to their orbits of sundry temporarily diverted masculine satellites. Her mother's friends did not exactly rejoice, for Dick Ogilvie had been a great "catch" and his capture was a sad loss, but they certainly sighed with relief; for they had always felt that Sally Habersham was altogether too charming to be left at large. About the only mourners were a score or so of young men, whose hearts sank like lead when they heard the news.

The young men took the blow variedly, each according to his nature. One or two made such a vehement pretense of not caring that everybody decided that they cared a great deal; two or three laughed at themselves in the vain hope of preventing other people from laughing at them; several got very drunk, as a gentleman might do without disgrace in that year of 1812; others hurriedly set

off to join the army of thirty-five thousand men that Congress had just authorized in preparation for the coming war with Great Britain; the rest stayed home and moped, unable to tear themselves away from the scene of their discomfiture.

Of them all none took the blow harder than Jacqueline Telfair, commonly known as Jack. Jack was just twenty-one, and the fact that he was a full year younger than Miss Habersham, had lain like a blight over the whole course of his wooing. In any other part of the land he might have concealed his lack of years, for he was unusually tall and broad and strong, but he could not do so at his home in Alabama, where everybody had known everything about everybody for two hundred years and more. Still, Jack hoped against hope and refused to believe the news until he received it from Miss Habersham's own lips.

Miss Habersham, by the way, was not quite so composed as she tried to be when she told him. Jack was so big and fine and looked at her so straight and, altogether, was such a lovable boy that her heart throbbed most unaccountably and before she quite knew what she was doing she had leaned forward and kissed him on the lips. "Good-by, Jack, dear," she said softly. Then, while Jack stood petrified, she turned and fled. She did not love Jack in the least and she did love Dick Ogilvie,



but—Oh! well! Jack was a gentleman; he would understand.

Jack did understand. For a few seconds he stood quite still; then he too walked away, white faced and silent.

The next morning he went out to hunt; that is, he took a light shot-gun and tramped away into the half dozen square miles of tangled woodland that lay at the back of the Telfair barony along the Tallapoosa River. But as he left his dog and his negro body-servant, Cato, at home, he probably went to be alone rather than to kill.

Spring was just merging into summer, and the sun spots were dancing in the perfumed air across the tops of the grasses. Great butterflies were flitting over the painted buttercups and ox-eyed daisies, skimming the shiny gossamers beneath which huge spiders lay in wait. From every bush came the twitter of nestlings or the wing flash of busy bird parents. Squirrels, red and gray, flattening themselves against the bark, peered round the trunks of great trees with bright, suspicious eyes. Molly cottontails crouched beneath the growing brambles. Round about lay the beautiful woodland, range after range of cobweb-sheeted glades splashed with yellow light. Crisp oaks and naked beeches, mingled with dark green hemlocks and burnished quivering pines, towered above bushes of

sumach and dogwood, twined and intertwined with swift-growing dewberry vines. From somewhere on the right came the sound of water rippling over a pebbly bed.

Abruptly Jack halted, stiffening like a pointer pup, and leaned forward, gun half raised, trying to peer through the sun-soaked bushes of the moist glade. He had heard no sound, seen nothing move, yet his skin had roughened just as that of a wild-cat roughens at the approach of danger. Instinct—the instinct of one born and brought up almost within sight of the frontier—told him that something dangerous was watching him from the jungly undergrowth before him. It might be a bear or a wolf or a panther, for none of these were rare in Alabama in the year 1812. But Jack thought it was something else.

He took a step backward, cocking his gun as he did so and questing warily to right and to left.

“Come out of those bushes and show yourself,” he ordered sharply.

From behind an oak an Indian stepped out, raising his right hand, palm forward, as he came. In the hollow of his left arm he carried a heavy rifle. Fastened in his scalp lock were feathers of the white-headed eagle, showing that he was a chief.

“Necana!” he said. “Friend!”

Instinctively Jack threw up his hand. “Necana!” he echoed. The tongue was that of the Shawnees.

Jack had not heard it for ten years, not since the last remnant of the Shawnee tribe had left the banks of the Tallapoosa and gone northward to join their brethren on the Ohio; but at the stranger's greeting the almost forgotten accents sprang to his lips. "Necana," he repeated. "What does my brother here, far from his own people?"

Wonderingly, he stared at the warrior as he spoke. The man was a Shawnee; so much was certain, but his costume differed somewhat from that of the Shawnees to whom Jack had been accustomed, and the intonation of his speech rang strange. His moccasins, the pouch that swung to his braided belt, all were foreign. His accent, too, was strange. Moreover, though clearly a chief, he was alone instead of being well escorted, as etiquette demanded. Plainly he had travelled fast and long, for his naked limbs were lean and worn, mere skin and bone and stringy muscles. Hunger spoke in his deep-set eyes.

At Jack's words his face lighted up. Evidently the sound of his own tongue pleased him. Across his breast he made a swift sign, then waited.

Dazedly Jack answered by another sign, the answering sign learned long ago when as a boy he had sat at a Shawnee council and had been adopted as a member of the clan of the Panther.

In response the savage smiled. "I seek the young chief Telfair," he said. "He whom the Shawnees of the south raised up as Te-pwe (he who speaks

with a straight tongue). Knowest thou him, brother?"

Jack stared in good earnest. "I am Jack Telfair," he said, haltingly, dragging the Shawnee words from his reluctant memory. "Ten years ago the squaw Methowaka adopted me at the council fire of the Panther clan." He hesitated. Ten years had blurred his memory of the ritual of the clan, but he knew well that it required him to proffer hospitality.

"My brother is welcome," he went on, stretching out his hand. "Will he not eat at the campfire of my father and rest a little beneath our roottree?"

The Shawnee clasped the hand gravely. "My brother's words are good," he answered. "Gladly would I stop with him if I might. But I come from a far country and I must return quickly. I turn aside from my errand to bring a message and a belt to my brother."

From his pouch the chief drew a belt of beautiful white wampum. "Will my brother listen?" he asked.

Jack nodded. "Brother! I listen," he answered.

"It is well! Many years ago a chief of the elder branch of my brother's house was the friend of Tecumseh. They dwelt in the same cabin and followed the same trails. They were brothers. Ten years ago the white chief travelled the long trail to the land of his fathers. But before he died he

said to Tecumseh: 'Brother! To you I leave my one child. Care for her as you would your own. Perhaps in days to come men of my own house may seek her, saying that to her belong much land and gold. If they come from the south, from the branch of my house living in Alabama, at the ancient home of the Shawnees, let her go with them. But if they come from the branch of my house that dwells in England do not let her go. The men of that branch, the branch of the chief Brito, are wicked and vile, men whose hearts are bad and who speak with forked tongues. If they come for her, then do you seek out my brothers in the south and tell them, that they may take her and protect her. If they fail you then let her live with you forever.'

" Since the chief died ten years have passed, and the maid has grown straight and tall in the lodge of Tecumseh. Now the chief Brito has come, wearing the redcoat of the English warriors. He speaks fair, saying that to the maid belong great lands and much gold and that he, her cousin, would take her across the great water and give them into her keeping. He is a big man, strong and skilful, to all seeming a fit mate for the maiden. If his tongue is forked, Tecumseh knows it not. But Tecumseh remembers the words of his dead friend and wishes not to give the maid up to one whom he hated. Yet he would not keep her from her own. Therefore he sends this belt to his younger brother, he of whom

his friend spoke, he whom the mother of Tecumseh raised up as a member of the Panther clan, and says to him: 'Come quickly. The maid is of your house; come and take her from my lodge at Wapakoneta and see that she gets all that is hers.'

Jack took the belt eagerly. To go to the lodge of Tecumseh to bring back a kinswoman to whom had descended great estates and against whom foes—he at once decided that they were foes—were plotting—What boy of twenty-one would not jump at the chance.

And to go to Ohio—the very name was a challenge. The Ohio of 1812 was not the Ohio of to-day, not the smiling, level country, set with towns, criss-crossed with railways, plastered with rich farms where the harvest leaps to the tickling of the hoe. It was far away, black with the vast shadow of perpetual forests, beneath which quaked great morasses. Within it roved bears, deer, buffalo, panthers, venomous snakes, renegades, murderers, Indians—the bravest and most warlike that the land had yet known.

Across it ran the frontier, beyond which all things were possible. For thirty years and more, in peace and in war, British officers and British agents had crossed it and had passed up and down behind it, loaded with arms and provisions and rewards for the scalps of American men and women and children. Steadily, irresistibly, unceasingly, the Americans

had driven back that frontier, making every fresh advance with their blood, their sweat, and their agony; and as steadily the redcoats had retreated, but had ever sent their savage emissaries to do their devilish work. Ohio had taken the place of Kentucky as a watchword with the adventurous youth of the east; to grow old without giving Ohio a chance to kill one had become almost a reproach.

Besides, war with Great Britain was unquestionably close at hand. All over the country troops were mustering for the invasion of Canada. General Hull in Ohio, General Van Rensselaer at Niagara, and General Bloomfield at Plattsburg were preparing to cross the northern border at a moment's notice. In Ohio, Jack would be in the very forefront of the fighting. Both by instinct and ancestry the lad was a born fighter, always on tip-toe for battle; he had shown this before and was to show it often afterwards. But the last three months had been an interlude, during which Sally Habersham had been the one real thing in a world of shadows. Now he had awakened. He would not dream in just the same way again.

With swelling heart he grasped the proffered belt.

“The maiden is white?” he questioned.

“As thyself, little brother. She is the daughter of Delaroche Telfair, the friend of Tecumseh, who

died at Pickawillany fifteen years ago. Moreover, she is very fair."

The Indian spoke simply. He did not ask whether Jack would come; the latter's acceptance of the belt pledged him to that course and to question him further would be insulting. He did not ask any pledge as to the treatment of the girl; apparently he well knew that none was necessary.

Jack considered. "I will find the maiden at Wapakoneta?" he questioned.

"If my brother comes quickly. My brother knows that war is in the air. If my brother is slow let him inquire of Colonel Johnson at Upper Piqua. The maiden is known as Alagwa (the Star). Has my brother more to ask?"

Jack shook his head. If he had been speaking to a white man he would have had a score of questions to ask; but he had learned the Indian taciturnity. All had been said; why vainly question more?

"No!" he answered. "I have nothing more to ask. My brother may expect me at Wapakoneta as quickly as possible. I go now to make ready." He did not again press his hospitality on the chief. He knew it would be useless.

The Shawnee bowed slightly; then he turned on his heel and melted noiselessly into the underbrush.

Jack stared after him wonderingly. Then he stared at the belt in his hand. So quickly the chief

had come and so quickly he had gone that Jack needed the sight of something material to convince himself that he had not been dreaming.

Not the least amazing part of the chief's coming had been the message he had brought. Jack had heard of Delaroche Telfair, but he had heard of him only vaguely. When his Huguenot forefathers had fled from France, a century and a quarter before, one branch had stopped in England and another branch had come to America. The American branch, at least, had not broken off all connection with the elder titled branch of the family, which had remained in France. Indeed, as the years went by and religious animosities died out, the connection had if anything grown closer. Communication had been solely by letter, but it is not rare that relatives who do not see each other are the better friends. A hundred years had slipped by and then the Terror had driven the Count Telfair and his younger brother, Delaroche, from France. The count had stayed in London and bye and bye had gone back to join the court of Napoleon. But Delaroche had shaken the soil of France from his feet and had crossed to America with a number of his countrymen and had founded Gallipolis, on the banks of the Ohio, the second city in the state. Later he had become a trader to the Indians and at last was rumored to have joined the Shawnees. That had

been fifteen years before and none of the Alabama Telfairs had heard of him since.

And now had come this surprising news. He was dead! His daughter had been brought up by the great chief Tecumseh and was nearly grown and was the heiress of great estates. Brito Telfair—Jack vaguely recalled the name as that of the head of the branch that had stopped in England—sought to get possession of her. Tecumseh liked him, but, bound by a promise to the girl's dead father, had refused to give her up and had sent all the weary miles from Ohio to Alabama to seek out the American Telfairs and keep his pledge. More, he might have long contemplated the necessity of keeping it. It might have been at his suggestion that his mother, Methowaka, who had been born in Alabama, at Takanbatchi, on the Tallapoosa River, not twenty miles from the Telfair barony, had revisited her old home about ten years before, shortly before her tribe had gone north for good and all, and had "raised up" Jack as a member of the great Panther clan.

And now he had sent for him, sent for him over nearly a thousand miles of prairie, swamp, and forest, past hostile Indian villages and suspicious white men. Jack thought of it and marvelled. Few white men would do so much to keep a pledge to a friend ten years dead!

As he pondered Jack had been pacing slowly homeward. At last he halted on a rustic bridge

thrown across a swift-flowing little creek that sang merrily through the woodland. On the hill beyond, at the crest of a velvety shadow-flecked lawn, rose the white-stoned walls of the home where he had been born and bred. Around it stretched acres of field and orchard, vivid with the delicate blossoms of apples and of plums, the pink-white haze of peach, the light green spears of corn, and the darker green of tobacco. Over his head a belted king-fisher screamed, a crimson cardinal flashed like a live coal from tree to tree, a woodpecker drummed at a tree. Below flashed the creek, a singing water pebbled with pearls. Jack did not see nor hear them; arms on rail he stared blankly, pondering.

A voice startled him and he swung round to face his body servant, Cato, a negro a few years older than himself.

Cato was panting. "Massa Colonel's home, suh," he gasped. "An' he want you, suh. He's in a pow'ful hurry."

Jack stared at the boy. "Father home!" he exclaimed, half to himself. "I didn't expect him for hours."

"He's done got home, suh. He ride Black Rover most near to death, suh. Yes, suh! He's in most pow'ful hurry."

CHAPTER II

COLONEL TELFAIR was striding excitedly up and down the wide verandah, lashing as he went at the tall riding boots he wore. His plum-colored, long-skirted riding coat, his much-be-ruffled white shirt, and his tight-fitting breeches were dusty and spattered with dried mud. It needed not the white-lathered horse with drooping head that a negro was leading from the horseblock to show that he had ridden fast and furiously.

From one end of the porch to the other he strode, stopping at each to scan the landscape, then restlessly paced back again. A dozen negroes racing in every direction confirmed the urgent haste that his manner showed.

Abruptly he paused as Jack, followed by Cato, came hurrying up the drive. "Hurry, sir, hurry," he bawled. "Don't keep me waiting all day."

Jack quickened his steps. "I didn't know you were back, father," he declared, as he came close. "I'm glad you are, sir. I've news, important news!"

The elder Telfair scowled. "News, have you, sir?" he rumbled. "So have I. Come inside, quick, and we'll exchange." Turning, he led the way through a deep hall into a great room, whose oak-panelled walls were hung with full-length portraits of dead and gone Telfairs—distinguished men and

women whose strong faces showed that in their time they had cut a figure in the world. There he faced round.

“Now, sir, tell your news,” he ordered. “I’ll warrant it’s short and foolish.”

“Perhaps!” Jack grinned; he and his father were excellent friends. “Did you know, sir, that our kinsman, Delaroche Telfair, was dead, leaving a daughter who is a ward of Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief?”

The elder Telfair blinked. “Good Lord!” he said, softly. He tottered a step or two backward and dropped heavily into a chair. “You’ve had a letter, too?” he gasped.

“A letter? No, sir; not a letter——”

“You must have, sir. Don’t trifle with me! I’m in no temper to stand it. Who brought you the letter?”

“I haven’t any letter, father. I haven’t heard of any letter. I met an Indian——”

“An Indian?”

“Yes. A Shawnee from Ohio, a messenger from Tecumseh——”

“Tecumseh! Good Lord! Do you know—But that can wait. Go on.”

“Delaroche seems to have pledged him to call on us in case certain things happened. They have happened and he has sent. He wants me to come and get the girl.”

"Good God!" muttered the elder man once more. "Look—look at this, Jack!" He held out an open letter. "I got it at Montgomery, and I rode like the devil to bring it, and here a murdering Shawnee gets ahead of me and—" His words died away; clearly the situation was beyond him.

Jack took the letter doubtfully and unfolded it. Then he looked at his father amazedly.

"It's from Capron, the lawyer for the Telfair estates in France," interjected the elder man. "It's in French, of course. Read it aloud! Translate it as you go."

Jack walked to the window, threw up the blind, and held the letter to the light.

"My very dear sir," he read. "It is my sad duty to apprise you that my so justly honored patron, Louis, Count of Telfair, passed away on the 30th ultimo, videlicet, December 30, 1811. The succession to the title and the estate now falls to the descendants of his brother, M. Delaroche Telfair, who, as you of course know, emigrated to America in 1790 and settled at Gallipolis on the Ohio, which without doubt is very close to your own estates in Alabama. Perhaps it is that you have exchanged frequent visits with him and that his history and the so sad circumstances of his death are to you of the most familiar. If so, much of this letter is unnecessary.

"In the remote contingency, however, that you may not know of his history in America, permit me to repeat

the little that is known to us here in France. It will call the attention; this:

"Among the papers of my so noble patron, just deceased, I have found a letter, dated June 10, 1800, with the seal yet unbroken, which appears to have reached the château Telfair many years ago but not to have been brought to his lordship's attention. Of a truth this is not surprising, the year 1800 being of the most disturbed and the years following being attended by turbulence both of politics and of strife, during which his lordship seldom visited the château.

"This letter inclosed certificates of the marriage at Marietta, Ohio, of M. Delaroche Telfair to Mlle. Margaret De la War, on June 18, 1794, and of the birth of a daughter, Estelle, on Oct. 9, 1795. The originals appear to be on file at Marietta. M. Delaroche says that he sends the copies as a precaution.

"No other information of father or daughter or of any other children appears to be of record, but the late count had without a doubt received further news, for he several times spoke to me of his so sadly deceased brother.

"In default of a possible son the title of Count of Telfair devolves on M. Brito Telfair, representative of the branch of the family so execrated by his lordship now departed. Your own line comes last. The estates go to the Lady Estelle Telfair, or, if she be deceased, to Count Brito Telfair, whose ancestors have long been domiciled in England."

Jack looked up. "Brito Telfair!" he exclaimed. "That's the name the Indian mentioned. Who is he exactly?"

"He's the head of the British branch. His people moved there a hundred years or so ago, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. We came to America and they stopped in England. I understand he's an officer in the British army, heavily in debt, and a general roué. I reckon he's about forty years old."

With a shrug of his shoulders—a trick inherited from his Gallic ancestors—Jack resumed:

"Not knowing where to reach the Lady Estelle (or other descendants of M. Delaroche) I address you, asking that you convey to her my most humble felicitations. I can not close, my dear sir, without a word of the caution. The Lady Estelle would appear to be about seventeen years of age. Her property in France is of a value, ah! yes, but of a value the most great. Adventurers will surely seek her out and she will need friends. Above all she should not be allowed to fall into the hands of M. Brito, who would undoubtedly wed her out of all hand to gain possession of her estates. Both the late count and M. Delaroche (when I knew him) hated and despised the English branch of M. Brito. To you, beloved of my master the count, I appeal to save and protect his heiress from those he so execrated. I have the honor, my very dear sir, to be your obedient servant. Verbum sapientes satis est.

HENRI CAPRON, avocat.

POSTSCRIPTUM.—I open this to add that I have just learned that M. Brito sailed with his regiment for Montreal a month ago. He is of a repute the most evil.

If he gets possession of the Lady Estelle he will without the doubt wed her, forcibly if need be. And it would be of a shame the most profound if the Telfair estates should be squandered in paying the debts of one so disreputable.

Jack crumpled the letter in his hand. "I should think it would be," he cried. "Thank the Lord Tecumseh remembered Delarache's warning. But let me tell you my story."

Rapidly Jack recounted the circumstances of the Shawnee's visit and recited the message he had brought. "This explains everything," he ended. "Brito Telfair wants to get possession of the girl and marry her before she knows anything about her rights. Well! He shan't!"

Colonel Telfair laughed. "Lord! Jack! You're heated," he exclaimed. "Brito Telfair probably isn't much worse than other men of his age and surroundings. You've got to allow for Capron's prejudices, national and personal. Marriage with him mightn't be altogether unsuitable. Still, we've got to make sure that it is suitable, and if it isn't, we've——"

"We've got to stop it!" Jack struck in. "The first thing is to find the girl and bring her here. We can decide what to do after that."

Colonel Telfair became suddenly grave. "Yes!" he answered, "I reckon we can, if——" He broke off and contemplated his son curiously. "How does

Tecumseh happen to send for you, sir?" he demanded. "But I reckon it comes of your running wild in their villages while they were down here. They adopted you or something, didn't they?"

Jack nodded. "Yes! Tecumseh's mother adopted me into the Panther clan. She was born down here, you know, and was back here on a visit when I knew her."

"Humph!" The old gentleman pondered a moment. Then suddenly he caught fire. "Yes! Go, Jack, go!" he thundered. "Damme, sir! I'd like to go with you, sir. I envy you! If I was a few years younger I'd go, too, sir! Damme! I would."

"I wish you could, father." The boy threw his arm affectionately about the older man's shoulders. "Lord! wouldn't we have times together. We'd rescue the girl and then we'd help General Hull smash the redcoats and the redskins."

"We would, sir! Damme, we would!" The old gentleman shook his fist in the air. "We'd—we'd—" He broke off, catching at his side, and dropped into a chair, which Jack hurriedly pushed forward. "Oh! Jack! Jack!" he groaned. "What d'ye mean by getting your old 'father worked up till he's ill?" Then with a sudden change of front—"You—you'll be careful, won't you, Jack? Not too careful, you know—not when you face the enemy, but—but—damme, sir, you know what I mean.

You needn't get yourself killed for the fun of it, sir. I—I'm an old man, Jack, and you're my only son and if you——”

“Don't fear, father! I know the woods. I know the trails. I know the Indian tongues. I am a member of the Panther clan. More, I am going to Ohio at the invitation of Tecumseh. Until war begins every member of my clan will be bound to help me because I am their clan brother; every Shawnee will be bound to help me because I am the friend of Tecumseh; every other warrior will befriend me once he knows who I am. If I travel fast I may rescue cousin Estelle before——”

“Estelle! Estelle! Good God! Yes! I'd forgotten her altogether. I wonder what she'll be like: not much like our young ladies; that's certain. Bring her back to us, Jack. We need a daughter in the family. And as for France, damme, I'll go over with her myself, sir.”

“I'll wager you will, father. I'll get her before war begins if I can. If I can't—well, I'll get her somehow. Once war begins, my clan membership fails and——”

“Well! Let it fail, sir. I don't half understand about this clan business of yours, sir. I don't approve of it, sir. How will war effect that, sir?”

Colonel Telfair's ignorance as to the Indian clans was no greater than that of nine-tenths of his fellow citizens, whether of his own times or of later

ones, dense ignorance having commonly prevailed not only as to the nature but as to the very existence of the clans.

But Jack knew them. Much had he forgotten, but in the last hour much had come back to him. Thoughts, memories, bits of ritual, learned long before and buried beneath later knowledge, struggled upward through the veil of the years and rose to his lips.

“They—they are like Masonic orders, father,” he began, vaguely. “They know no tribe, no nation. Mohawks and Shawnees and Creeks of the same clan are brothers, and yet—and yet—if the Shawnee sends a war belt to the Creeks, clan ties are suspended—just as between Masons of different nations. But when the battle is over, fraternity brothers are bound to succor each other, bound to ransom each other from the flame. This they may perhaps do by persuading the tribe to adopt them in place of some warrior who has been slain.”

“Humph! I thought they had been adopted already?”

“As members of the clan, yes! Adoption by the tribe is different. It changes the entire blood of him who is adopted. He *becomes* the man whose name and place he takes, and he is bound to live and fight as his predecessor would have lived and fought and to forget that he ever lived another life. Membership in the clans by birth is strictly

in the female line. The women control them and decide who shall be adopted into them."

"All right. I don't half understand. But I suppose you do. Any way, I'm glad you've got your membership to help you—Look here, Jack!" An idea had struck the elder man. "D—d if I don't believe that warrior of yours was Tecumseh himself. I started to speak of it when you first named him. I met Colonel Hawkins—he's the Indian agent—this morning and he told me that a big chief from the north was down here, powwowing to the Creeks at Takabatchi—urging them to dig up the hatchet, I reckon. Tecumseh was here a year ago, you know. Maybe he's come back!"

Jack nodded, absently. "Maybe it was Tecumseh, father," he answered. He had just remembered Sally Habersham and he was wondering if she would grieve when she heard that he had gone away. For a time, perhaps! But not for long. She would have other thoughts to engross her. Jack knew it and was glad to know it. He wanted no one to be unhappy because of him—least of all Sally Habersham. She who had been so kind—so kind—His lips burned at the memory of her kiss. "I'll prove myself worthy of it!" he swore to himself. "I'll carry it unsullied to the end. No other woman——"

Telfair broke in. "Damme! sir! What are you moonshining about now?" he roared. "About your

cousin Estelle? Bring her back and marry her, Jack. She's a great heiress, my lad, a great heiress."

Jack drew himself up. Strangely enough he had thought little about the girl-child for whose sake he was going to undertake the long journey. His father's words grated on him.

"I shall never marry, father," he declared.

CHAPTER III

THE sun was about to climb above the rim of the world. Already the white dawn was silverying the grey mists that lay alike on plain and on river and half hid the mossy green boles of the trees that stood on the edge of the forest. From beneath it sounded the low murmur of the waters of the Auglaize, toiling sluggishly through the timbers that choked its bed and gave it its Indian name of Cowthenake, Fallen Timber river. High about it whimpered the humming rush of wild ducks. From the black wall of the forest that led northward to the Black Swamp came the waking call of birds.

Steadily the light grew. The first yellow shafts shimmered along the surface of the mist, stirring it to sudden life. Out of the draperies of fog, points seemed to rise, black against the curtain of the dawn. To them the mists clung with moist tenacious fingers, resisting for a moment the call of the sun, then shimmering away, leaving only a trace of tears to sparkle in the sunlight.

Steadily the sun mounted and steadily the mists shrank. The spectral points, first evidence that land and not water lay beneath the fog, broadened downward, here into tufts of hemlock, there into smoother, more regular shapes that spoke of human

workmanship. Louder and louder grew the rippling of the river. Then, abruptly, the carpet of mist rose in the air, shredding into a thousand wisps of white; for a moment it obscured the view, then it was gone, floating away toward the great forest, as if seeking sanctuary in its chilly depths. The black river was still half-veiled, but the land lay bare, sparkling with jewelled dew-drops.

Close beside the river, on an elevation that rose, island like, above the surrounding plain, stood the Indian village, row after row of cabins, strongly built of heavy logs, roofed with poles, and chinked with moss and clay. In and out among them moved half-wolfish dogs, that had crept from their lairs to welcome the rising of the sun.

No human being was visible, but an indistinct murmur, coming from nowhere and everywhere, mingled with the rush of the river and the whisper of the wind in the green rushes and the tall grass. The huts seemed to stir visibly; first from one and then from a score, men, women, and children bobbed out, some merrily, some grumpily, to stretch themselves in the sunshine and to breathe in the soft morning air before it began to quiver in the baking heat that would surely and swiftly come. For early June was no less hot in northern Ohio in 1812, when the whole country was one vast alternation of swamp and forest, than it is a hundred years later when the land has been drained and the forest cut away.

From the door of a cabin near the centre of the town emerged a girl sixteen or seventeen years of age, who stood still in the sunbeams, eyes fixed on the trail that led away through the breaks in the forest to the south. Her features, browned as they were by the sun and concealed as they were by paint, yet plainly lacked the high cheek-bones, black eyes, and broad nostrils of the Indians. Some alien blood showed itself in the softness of her cheek, in the kindling color in her long dark hair, in the brown of her eyes. Her graceful body had the straight slenderness that in the quick-maturing Indian maids of her size and height had given place to the rounded curves of budding womanhood. Her head, alertly poised above her strong throat, showed none of the marks of ancestral toil that had already begun to bow her companions. In dress alone was she like them, though even in this the unusual richness of her doeskin garb, belted at the hips with silver, marked her as one of prominence.

For a little longer the girl watched the southward trail; then her eyes roved westward, across the rippling waters of the Auglaize, now veiled only by scattered wisps of mist, and across its border of sedgy grass, pale shimmering green in the mounting sun, and rested on a cabin that stood on the further bank, between an orchard and a small field of enormous corn. From this cabin two men were just emerging.

They were too far away indeed for the average civilized man or woman to distinguish more than that they were men and were dressed as whites. The girl, however, was possessed of sight naturally strong and had been trained all her life amid surroundings where quickness of vision might easily mean the difference between life and death. She had seen the men before and she recognized them instantly.

One of them wore a red coat and carried himself with a ramrod-like erectness that bespoke the British officer; the girl knew that he was from Canada, probably from the fort at Malden, to which for three years the Indians from a thousand square miles of American soil had been going by tens and hundreds to return laden with arms and ammunition and presents from His Majesty, the King of Great Britain. The second was of medium height, shaggy, dressed in Indian costume, with a handkerchief bound about his forehead in place of a hat. He could only be James Girty, owner of the cabin, or his brother Simon, of infamous memory—more probably the latter.

As the girl watched them an Indian squaw crept out of a near-by cabin and came toward her.

“Ever the heart of Alagwa (the Star) turns toward the white men,” said she, harshly.

The girl started, the swift blood leaping to her

cheeks. "Nay!" she said. "These white men have red hearts. They are the friends of the Indian. Katepakomen (*Girty*) is an Indian; his white blood has been washed from his veins even as my own!"

"*Your* own!" The old woman laughed scornfully. "Not so! *Your* heart is not red. It is white."

Alagwa's was not the Indian stoicism that meets all attacks with immobility. Her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears. "I am not white," she quavered. "I am red, red."

The old woman hesitated. She knew that between equals what she had said would have been all but unforgiveable. Alagwa had been adopted into the tribe years before in the place of another Alagwa who had died. She had been "raised up" in place of her. Theoretically all white blood had been washed out of her. She *was* the dead. To remind her of her other life and ancestry was the worst insult imaginable. The old woman knew that Tecumseh would be very angry if he heard it. But she had an object to gain and went on.

"Then why does Alagwa refuse my son?" she said. "Why does she defy the customs of her people—if they are her people. The council of women have decreed that she shall wed Wilwiloway. If her heart is red why does she not obey?"

The girl hung her head. "I—I am too young to wed," she protested.

“Bah!” the old woman spat upon the ground. “Alagwa has seen seventeen summers. Other girls wed at fifteen. Why should Alagwa scorn my son. Is he not straight and tall? Is he not first among the warriors in war and in chase? Has he not brought back many scalps? Alagwa’s heart is white—not red.”

“But——”

“Were Wilwiloway other than he is, he would long ago have taken Alagwa to his hut. But he will not. His heart, too, is white. He says Alagwa must come to him willingly or not at all. He will not let us compel her. He——” The old woman broke off with a catch in her voice—“he loves Alagwa truly,” she pleaded, wistfully. “Will not Alagwa make his moccasins and pound his corn!”

The girl, who had slowly straightened up under the assault of the old woman, weakened before the sudden change of tone.

“Oh!” she cried. “I will try. Truly! I will try. Wilwiloway is good and kind and brave. I am proud that he has chosen me. I wish I could love him. But—but I do not, and I must love before I give myself. I am bad! wicked! I know it. Yes! I have a white heart. But I will pray to Mishe-manitou, the Great God, to make it red.”

The old woman caught the sobbing girl to her heart. “Do not weep!” she said, gently. “See! the sun burns red through the trees; it is the answer

of Manitou, the mighty. He sends it as a message that your heart shall turn from white to red. There! It is changed! Look up, Alagwa, and be glad."

The girl raised her head and stared at the line of trees that curled away in a great crescent toward the east and the west. The sun did indeed burn red through them. Could it be an omen? As she stared the squaw slipped silently away.

Alagwa's heart was burning hot within her. The squaw's accusation that her heart was white had cut deep. All her remembered life she had been taught to hate and fear the white men. White men were the source of all evil that had befallen her. They had driven her and her people back, back, ever back, forcing them to give up one home after another. White men had slain her friends; never did she inquire for some dear one who was missing but to be told that he had been killed by the white men. Again and again in her baby ears had rung the cries of the squaws, weeping for the dead who would return no more. Of the other side of the picture she knew nothing. Of the red rapine the Shawnee braves had wrought for miles and miles to the south she had heard, but it was to her only a name, not the awful fact that it had been to its victims. To her the whites were aggressors, robbers, murderers, who were slowly but surely crushing her Indian friends.

Only the year before they had destroyed her home at Tippecanoe on the banks of the Wabash. Well she remembered their advance, their fair speaking that concealed their implacable purpose to destroy her people. Well she remembered the great Indian council that debated whether to fight or to yield, the promises of the Prophet that his medicine would shield the Indians against the white men's bullets, the night attack, the repulse, the flight across miles of prairie to the ancestral home at Wapakoneta. She remembered Tecumseh's return—too late. Here, also, she knew nothing of the other side—of the absolute military necessity that the headquarters from which Tecumseh was preparing to sweep the frontier should be destroyed and its menace ended. It was she and her friends who had suffered and it was she and her friends who had fled, half starved, across those perilous miles of swamp and morass. It was the white men who had triumphed; and she hated them, hated them, hated them. The memory of it all was bitter.

And it was no less bitter because revenge seemed hopeless. Tecumseh was planning revenge, she knew, but he no longer found the support he had gained a year before. His own people, the Shawnees, implacable fighters as they had been, had wearied of war at last. Black Wolf, the chief at Wapakoneta, himself once a great warrior and a

bitter foe of the whites, now preached that further resistance was vain—that it meant only death. Many of the tribe sided with him, for the Indian, no more than the white man, unless maddened by long tyranny, cares to engage in a contest where triumph is hopeless. The only hope lay in the redcoats, soldiers of the great king across the water. They were planning war against the Long Knives. If they should make common cause with the red men, revenge might yet be won. If she could do anything to help!

A footstep startled her and she flashed about to find Simon Girty and the tall man in the red coat almost upon her. While she had dreamed of the return of Tecumseh they had crossed the Auglaize river and had come upon her unawares.

Girty was as she had many times remembered him—a deeply-tanned man perhaps forty years of age, with gray, sunken eyes, thin and compressed lips, hyena chin, and dark shaggy hair bound with a handkerchief above a low forehead, across which stretched a ghastly half-healed wound. In his arms he carried a great bale, carefully wrapped.

The other—Alagwa had never seen his like before—was tall and powerful looking. His carriage was graceful and easy. His dark face, handsome in a way though plainly not so handsome as it had been some years before, was characterized by a powerful

jaw that diverted attention from his strong mouth and aquiline nose. He was regarding the girl with an expression evidently intended to be friendly, but which somehow grated. It seemed at once condescending, appraising, and insolent.

All this Alagwa took in at a glance as she shrank backward, intent on flight. But before she could move Girty's voice broke in.

"Stop!" he ordered, sharply, in the Shawnee tongue. "The white chief from afar would speak with the Star maiden."

Alagwa paused, looking fearfully backward. But she did not speak and Girty went on.

"The white chief is of the House of Alagwa," he declared. "His heart is warm toward her. He brings good news and many presents to lay at her feet." He laid down the bale.

Alagwa looked from it to the man and back again. "Let him speak," she said, in somewhat halting English.

At the sound of his own tongue the Englishman's face lighted up and he took an impulsive step forward. "You speak English?" he exclaimed, with a note of wonder in his voice. "Why did nobody tell me that? How did you learn?" His surprise did not seem altogether complimentary.

Alagwa was studying him shyly. She found his pink and white complexion very pleasing after the

coppery skins of the Indians and the no less swarthy faces of most of the white men she had seen. Besides, this man wore a red coat and the redcoats were the friends of Tecumseh. "I speak it a little," she said, hesitatingly. As a matter of fact she spoke it rather well, having picked up much from time to time from Colonel Johnson, the Indian agent, from two or three white prisoners, and from Tecumseh himself.

"That's lucky. If I'd known that I'd have spoken to you before and settled the business out of hand. You wouldn't guess it, of course, little forest maiden that you are, but you are a cousin of mine?"

"A cousin? I?" Startled, palpitating, Alagwa leaned forward, staring with wide eyes. No white man except her father had ever claimed kin with her. What did it mean, this sudden appearance of one of her blood?

"Yes! You're my cousin and, egad, you'll do the family honor! I'm Captain Count Brito Telfair, you know, and you are the Lady Estelle Telfair. Your father was my kinsman. I never met him, for he and his people lived in France, and I and my people lived in England. Your uncle was the Count Telfair. He died not long ago. He had neglected you shamefully, but when he died it became my duty as head of the house to come over here and fetch you back to France and give you everything you want. Do you understand?"

Alagwa did not understand wholly. Not only the words but the ideas were new to her. But she gathered that she had white kinspeople, that they had not altogether forgotten her, and that the speaker had come to bring her gifts from them. Doubtfully she nodded.

"I saw Tecumseh two months ago," went on Captain Brito, "and I saw you, too." He smiled engagingly. "You were outside Tecumseh's lodge as I came out and I remember wishing that my new cousin might prove to be half as charming. Of course I did not know you. Tecumseh told me that he knew where Delaroche's daughter was, but he refused to tell me anything more. He said he would produce her in two months." Captain Brito's face darkened. "These Indians are very insolent, but —Well, I waited for a time, but when Tecumseh went away I made inquiries, and Girty here found you for me. I can't tell you how delighted I am to find that you and the charming little girl I saw outside the lodge are one and the same. It makes everything delightful."

Alagwa's head was whirling. For ten years, practically all of her life that she could remember, she had lived the life of an Indian with no thought outside of the Indians. She had rejoiced with their joys, and grieved with their woes. Like them she had hated the Americans from the south and had looked upon the English on the north as her friends.

And now abruptly another life had opened before her. A redcoat officer had claimed her as kinswoman. The easy, casual, semi-contemptuous air with which he spoke scarcely affected her, for she had been used to concede the supremacy of man. She did not know what this claim might portend, but it made her happy. No thought that she might have to leave her Indian home had yet crossed her mind. Brito's assertion that he had come to take her to France had not yet seeped into her understanding. To her France and England were little more than words.

Uncertainly she smiled. "I am glad," she murmured.

Captain Brito took her hand and raised it to his lips. "You will be more than glad when you understand," he declared, patronizingly. "Of course you can't realize what a change this means for you." He glanced round and shuddered. "After this—ugh—England and France will be paradise to you. Get ready and as soon as Tecumseh comes back and gives me the proofs of your identity I'll take you to Canada and then on to England."

Alagwa shrank back. "I? To England?" she gasped.

"Of course." Captain Brito smiled. "All of your house are loyal Englishmen and you must be a loyal Englishwoman. You really don't know what

a wonderful country England is. It's not a bit like this swampy, forest-covered Ohio. And the people—Oh! Well! you'll find them very different from the Indians and from the bullying murdering Americans. You'll learn to be a great lady in England, you know."

A shadow fell between the two, and an Indian, naked save for a breech-clout and for the eagle feathers rising from his scalp-lock, thrust himself between the girl and the intruders.

"White men go!" he ordered, in Shawnee.
"Take presents and go!"

Brito's face flushed brick-red. He did not understand the words, but he could not mistake the tone. His hand fell to his sword hilt. Instantly, however, Girty stepped between. "Why does the Chief Wilwiloway interfere?" he demanded.

Wilwiloway leaned forward, his fierce eyes glittering into those of the renegade. "Tecumseh say white men no speak to Alagwa. White men go!" he ordered again. His words came like a low growl.

For a moment the others hesitated. Then Brito nodded and said something to Girty and the latter drew back, snarling but yielding. Brito himself turned to Alagwa. "Good-by, cousin," he called. "Since this—er—gentleman objects I'll have to go. With your permission I'll return later—when Tecumseh is back." With a smile and a bow he

turned away. He knew he could not afford to quarrel with Tecumseh until he had secured the proofs of the girl's identity.

Wilwiloway called Girty back. "Take presents," he ordered, pointing; and with a savage curse the man obeyed.

Wilwiloway watched them go. Then he turned to Alagwa and his face softened. "They are bad men," he said, gently. "Their words are forked. Tecumseh commands that Alagwa shall not speak with them."

The girl did not look altogether submissive. Nevertheless she nodded. "Alagwa will remember," she promised. "Yet surely Tecumseh is deceived. The white man speaks with a straight tongue. He brings Alagwa great tidings. And the redcoats are the friends of the Shawnees."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders. "Tecumseh speaks; Alagwa must obey!" he declared, bluntly. Then he turned away, leaving the girl to wonder—quite as mightily as if she had lived all her life among her civilized sisters.

How long she stood and wondered she never knew. Abruptly she was roused by a sound of voices from the direction of the southern outposts. Steadily the sound grew, deepening into a many-throated chant—the chant of welcome to those returning from a journey—the chant of thanksgiving that those

arriving have passed safely over all the perils of the way:

Greatly startled now have I been today
By your voice coming through the woods to this
clearing;
With a troubled mind have you come
Through obstacles of every kind.

Great thanks, therefore, we give, that safely
You have arrived. Now then, together,
Let both of us smoke. For all around indeed
Are hostile powers—

Alagwa spun round. She knew what the song meant—Tecumseh was returning.

A moment later he passed her, striding onward to his lodge. His face was stern—the face of one who goes to face the great crisis of his life. Behind him came chief after chief, warrior after warrior, members of many tribes. Versed in Indian heraldry as she was, Alagwa could not read half the ensigns there foregathered.

CHAPTER IV

FOR nearly a month Jack Telfair, with black Cato at his heels, had been riding northward through a country recently reclaimed from the wilderness and reduced to civilization. Day after day he passed over broad well-beaten roads from village to village and from farmstead to farmstead, where clucking hens and lowing cattle had taken the place of Indian, bear, and wildcat. Between, he rode through long stretches of wilderness, where the settlements lay farther and farther apart and the ill-kept way grew more and more rugged and silver-frosted boulders glistened underfoot in the dawn.

The route lay wholly west of the Alleghenies and the travellers had to climb no such mighty barrier as that which stretched between the Atlantic and the west. But the land steadily rose, and day by day the sunset burned across increasing hills. The two passed Nashville—a thriving town growing like a weed—and came at last to the Kentucky border and the crest of the watershed between the Cumberland and the Green river. Here, cutting across the headwaters of a deep, narrow creek, ice cold and crystal clear, filled with the dusky shadows of darting trout, they stumbled into the deep-cut trail

travelled for centuries by Indian warriors bound south from beyond the Ohio to wage war on tribes living along the Atlantic and the Gulf. This trail was nearly a thousand miles long; one branch started from the mouth of the Mississippi and the other from the Virginia seaboard, and the two met in southern Kentucky, crossed the Ohio, and followed the Miami toward the western end of Lake Erie. Jack had only to follow it to reach his destination.

Like all Indian pathways, the trail clung to the highest ground, following the route that was driest in rain, clearest of snow in winter and of brush and leaves in summer, and least subject to forest fires. Much of it was originally lined out by buffalo, which found the way of least resistance as instinctively as the red men, but long stretches of it had been made by the Indians alone. The buffalo trail was broad and deep and was worn five or six feet into the soil; the Indian trail was in few places more than a foot deep and was so narrow that it was impossible to see more than a rod along it. No one could traverse it without breaking the twigs and branches of the dense bushes that overhung it on either side, leaving a record that to the keen eye of the savage and of the woodsman was eloquent to the number who had passed and the time of their passage. No one who once travelled its vistaless stretches could fail to understand the ease with which ambushes and surprises could be effected.

Though the trail clung to high ground the exigencies of destination compelled it in places to go down into the valleys. It had to descend to cross the Kentucky river and to descend again into the valley of the Licking as it approached the Ohio at Cincinnati. In such places it had often been overflowed and obliterated and its route was far less definite. However, this no longer mattered, for in all such parts it had long been incorporated into the white man's road. Much of it, however, still endured and was to endure for more than a hundred years. Beyond the Ohio it climbed once more and followed the crest of the divide between Great and Little Miami rivers to Dayton, Piqua, and Wapakoneta.

Thirty years before men had fought their way over every inch of that trail, dying by scores along it from the arrow, the tomahawk, and the bullet. But that had been thirty years before. For twenty years the trail had been safe as far as the Ohio; for ten it had been measurably safe halfway up the state, to the edge of the Indian country.

Throughout the journey Jack tried hard to be mournful. Every dawn as he opened his eyes on a world new created, vivid, baptized with the consecration of the dew, he reminded himself that life could hold no happiness for him—since Sally Habershaw had given her hand to another. Every noon-tide as he saw the fields swelling with the growing

grain, the apples shaping themselves out of the air, the vagrant butterflies seeking their painted mates above the deep, moist, clover-carpeted meadows, he told himself that for him alone all the vast processes of nature had ceased. Every evening, when the landscape smouldered in the setting sun, when the red lights burned across the tips of the waving grasses, when the burnished pines pointed aspiringly higher, when the rushing rapids on the chance streams glittered in sparkling points of multi-colored fire, he assured himself that to himself there remained only the hard, straight path of duty.

Yet, in spite of himself, the edge of his grief grew slowly but surely dull. The bourgeoning forests, the swelling mountains, the vast stretches of solitude were all so many veils stretched between him and the past. His love for Sally Habersham did not lessen, perhaps, but it became unreal, like the memory of a dear, dead dream that held no bitterness. It was hard to brood on the life of gallant and lady, of silver and damask, of polished floors and stately minuets, when his every waking minute had to be spent in meeting the intensely practical problems that beset the pioneers. It was hard to assure himself that he would live and die virgin and that his house should die with him, when, as often as not, he dropped off to sleep in the same house, if not the same room, with a dozen or more sturdy boys and girls that were being raised by one

of those same pioneers and his no less vigorous wife.

Besides, Cato would not let him brood. Cato had feminine problems of his own which he insisted on submitting to his master's judgment. When rebuffed, he preserved an injured silence till he judged that Jack's mood had softened and then returned blandly to the charge. Very early on the trip Jack gave up in despair all attempts to check his menial's tongue; he realized that nothing short of death would do this, and he could not afford to murder his only companion, though he often felt as if he would like to do it.

"There ain't no use a talkin', Marse Jack," Cato observed one day. "The onliest way to git along with a woman is to keep her a-guessin'. Jes' so long as she don' know whar you is or what you's a-thinkin', you's all right. But the minute she finds out whar you is, then whar is you? Dat's what I ax you, Marse Jack?"

Jack shook his head abstractedly. "I'm sure I don't know, Cato," he said. "Where are you?"

"You ain' nowhar, that's what you is. Dar was Colonel Jackson's gal Sue. Mu m u m ph! Couldn't dat gal make de beatenest waffles! An' didn't she make 'em foh me for most fo' months till I done ax her to marry me! An' didn't she stop makin' 'em right spang off? An' didn't she keep on stoppin' till I tuk up with Sophy? An' then didn't she begin again? Yes, suh; it's jes' like I'm tellin' you. Jes'

as long as a woman thinks she's got you, you ain't nobody; and the minute she thinks some other gal's got you, then you's everything. Talk to me about love! Gals don't know what love is. All they wants is to spite the other gals."

"Well! How did you make out, Cato. Did you fix on Sue or Sophy?"

"Now, Marse Jack, you know I ain't a-goin' to throw myself away on none of them black nigger gals. I'se too light complected to do that, suh. Besides, Sue and Sophy done disappointed me. They pointedly did, suh. Jes' as I was a-makin' up my mind to marry Mandy—Mandy is dat yaller gal of Major Habersham's; I done met her when you was co'ting Miss Sally—Sue and Sophy got together and went to Massa Telfair and tole him about it and Massa Telfair say I done got to marry one of them two inside a week, an' if you hadn't done start off so sudden I reckon's I'd a been married and done fo' befo' now, suh. Massa Telfair's plumb sot in his ways, suh."

Jack was tired of the talk. "Oh! Well! I reckon Mandy'll be waiting for you when you get back," he answered, idly.

Cato smiled broadly. "Ain't dat de trufe?" he chuckled, delightedly. "I ain't ax Mandy yit, but she 'spec's me to. I tell you, Marse Jack, you got to keep 'em guessin', yes, you is, suh. Jes' as long as you does you got 'em."

Cato rung the changes on his tale with infinite variations. Jack heard about Sue and Sophonia and Mandy from Alabama to Ohio, from the Tala-poosa to the Miami. It was only when he reached Dayton that the loves of his henchman were pushed into the background by more urgent affairs.

Dayton was alive with the war fever. Governor Hull, of Michigan, who had been appointed a brigadier general, had started north from there nearly a month before with thirty-five hundred volunteers and regulars and was now one hundred miles to the north, cutting his way laboriously through the vast forest of the Black Swamp. At last reports he had reached Blanchard River, and had built a fort which he called Fort Findlay. So far as Ohio knew war had not yet been declared, but news that it had been was expected daily. The whole state awaited it in apprehension, not from fear of the British, but from terror of their ruthless red allies.

Not a man or woman in all Ohio but knew what Indian warfare meant. Not one but could remember the silent midnight attack on the sleeping farmhouse, the blazing roottree, the stark, gashed forms that had once been men and women and little children, the wiping out of the labor of years in a single hour.

Every sight and sound of forest and of prairie mimicked the clash. The hammering of the wood-pecker was the pattering of bullets, the thump of

the beaver was the thud of the tomahawk, the scream of the fishhawk the shriek of dying women, the scolding of the chipmunks in the long grass the chatter of the squaws around the torture post, the red reflection of the setting sun the gleam of blazing roof-trees.

Ah! Yes! Ohio knew what Indian war meant.

And Cato, for the first time, realized whither he was going. He ceased to talk of his sweethearts and began to pray for his soul.

At last Jack came to Piqua. Piqua stood close to the boundary of the Indian country, which then spread over the whole northwestern quarter of Ohio. North of it lay the great Black Swamp, through which roved thousands of Indians, nominally peaceful, but potentially dangerous. At Piqua, too, dwelt Colonel John Johnson, the United States Indian agent, whose business it was to keep them quiet.

As Jack rode into the outskirts of the tiny scattered village, a middle-aged man with long, gray whiskers, skull cap, and buckskin trousers came up to him.

"Hello, stranger!" he bawled. "What's the news?"

Jack reined in. "Sorry, but I haven't any," he replied.

"Whar you from?"

"From Dayton and the south."

"Sho! Ain't Congress declared war yet?"

“Not that I know of. The last news from Washington was that they were still debatatin’.”

“Debatin’? Well! I just reckon they are debatin’. Lord sakes, stranger, don’t it make you sick and tired to hear a lot of full grown men a-talkin’ and a-talkin’ like a pack of women. Just say what you got to say and stop; that’s my motto. And here’s Congress a-talkin’ and a-talkin’ and a-wastin’ time while the Injuns are fillin’ up with fire-water and sharpenin’ their tomahawks and the country’s going to the devil. Strike first, and talk afterwards, say I. But then I never was much of one to talk. I guess livin’ in the woods makes you kinder silent, and ——”

“What’s the news from the north?” Hopeless of a pause in the old man’s garrulity Jack broke in.

The old man accepted the interruption with entire good humor if not with pleasure, and straightway started on a new discourse. “Bad, bad, mighty bad, stranger,” he declared. “That red devil, Tecumseh, has been a-traveling about the country but he’s back now and the Injuns are getting ready to play thunder with everybody. Colonel Johnson says you ought to treat ‘em kind and honeyswoggle ‘em all the time, but that ain’t my way, and it ain’t the way of nobody that knows Injuns. How far north is you aimin’ to go, stranger?”

“To Wapakoneta, I think.”

“Then I reckon you’ll have to see Colonel John-

son. What did you say your name was? Mine's Rogers—Tom Rogers."

Jack grinned. "I didn't say," he answered. "But it's Jack Telfair."

"Telfair! Telfair! Seems to me I kinder remember hearin' of somebody of that name. But it's mighty long ago. Let's see, now, I wonder could it ha' been that fellow that we whipped for stealin'—Pshaw, no, that was a fellow named Helden. He was——"

"Where'll I find Colonel Johnson," demanded Jack, in despair.

"Well, now, that's mighty hard to tell. Colonel Johnson sloshes round a whole lot. Maybe you'll find him at John Manning's mill up at the bend here or maybe you'll have to go to his place at Upper Piqua or maybe you'll have to go further. I reckon you didn't stop at Stanton as you come along, did you? Colonel Johnson's mighty thick with Levy Martin down there, and he's liable to be at his house, or at Peter Felix's store."

Jack shook his head. "No, I didn't come by Stanton."

By this time a number of other white men had come up. The old hunter insisted on making Jack known to all of them. Jack heard the names of Sam Hilliard, Job Garrard, Andrew Dye, Joshua Robbins, Daniel Cox, and several others. All of them were anxious for news in regard to the coming

war, and all shook their heads dubiously when they heard that Jack proposed to go further north.

"It's taking your life in your hands these days, youngster," remarked Andrew Dye, a patriarchal-looking old man. "There's ten thousand Injuns pretendin' to be tame between here and Wapakoneta and the devil only knows how many more there are north of it. Tecumseh's sort of civilized, but his Shawnees ain't Tecumseh by a long shot. And them d— British are stirrin' 'em up. Course you may get there all right, but when you go trampin' in where angels are 'fraid to, you're mighty apt to get turned into an angel yourself."

"I guess I've got to go," said Jack. "I want to get somebody who knows the country to go along with me."

"What's the matter with me?" broke in Rogers. "I ain't a-pining to lose my scalp, but I reckon if I won't go nobody will. And I don't want no big pay neither. You and me'll agree on terms mighty easy. I can take you anywhere. I know all the Injuns. Why! Lord! They call me——"

Job Garrard laughed. "Yes," he said. "Tom can take you anywhere. Tom's always willing to stick in. He stuck in on Judge Blank's court down in Dayton the other day, didn't you, Tom? Haw! Haw! Haw!"

A burst of laughter ran round the group. Everybody laughed indeed, except Tom himself. "You

boys think you're blamed funny," he tried to interpose.

But the others would not hear him.

"Maybe you heard something about it as you come through Dayton, stranger!" said Dye. "Tom tromped right into court and he heard the judge dressin' down two young lawyers that had got to fussin'. I reckon Tom had been a-practicin' at another bar, for he yells out: 'Give it to 'em, old gimlet eyes.' The judge stops short. 'Who's that?' he asked. Tom thinks he's going to ask him upon the bench or something and he steps out an' says: 'It's this yer old hoss!' The judge he looks at him for a minute an' then he calls the sheriff and says, 'Sheriff, take this old hoss out and put him in a stall and lock the stable up and see that he don't get stole before to-morrow mornin'. And the sheriff done it, too. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

The laughter was interrupted by the appearance of a wagon drawn by mules and driven by a man who looked neither to the right nor to the left.

Rogers, glad of any change of subject, jumped forward. "Hey!" he yelled. "What's the news?"

The driver paid no attention to the call. His companion on the box, however, leaned out. "Go to h—l, you old grand-daddy long legs," he yelled.

The old hunter's leathery cheek reddened. But before he could retort a horseman appeared in the

road in front of the wagon and threw up his hand.

“Hold on, boys,” he called. “Hold on! I want to speak to you.”

The driver hesitated; then, compelled by something in the eyes of the man, he sulkily reined in. As he did so Jack and the little crowd about him moved over to the wagon.

“I’m Tom Rich, deputy of Colonel Johnson, the Indian agent up here,” the horseman was explaining, peaceably. “Colonel Johnson’s away just now and I’ve got to see everybody that goes north to trade with the Injuns.”

“We ain’t going to trade with no Injuns,” said the man who appeared to be the leader. “We’re taking supplies to Fort Wayne for the Government. I reckon you ain’t got no call to stop us.”

“Not a bit of it, boys. Not a bit of it. Just let me see your papers and you can go right along.”

The man sought in his pockets and finally extracted a paper which he passed to Rich, who scanned it carefully. “Your name’s David Wolf, is it?” he questioned, “and your friend’s name is Henry Williams?”

“That’s right and we ain’t got no time to waste. There ain’t no tellin’ when war’ll be declared an’——”

“No! There’s no telling. You can go along if you want to, but I’ve got to warn you—warn all of you.” Rich’s eye swept the group. “We got news

this morning that there was a big council at Wapakoneta last night. There was a British officer there in uniform and he and Tecumseh tried to get the Shawnees to go north. Black Hoof (Catahecasa) stood out against them, and our news is that less than two hundred braves went. Still, there's no telling, and the country's dangerous. Colonel Johnson's at Wapakoneta now. Better wait till he gets back."

"Wait nothin'." Wolf spat loudly into the road. "General Hull rushed us here with supplies for Fort Wayne and we're going through. If any darned Injun gets in our way he won't stay in it long. My pluck is to shoot first and question after."

The deputy's brow grew stern. "You'll be very careful who you shoot and when," he ordered, sternly. "A single Indian murdered by a white man might set the border in flames and turn thousands of friendly Indians against us. I'll let you go through, but I warn you that if you shoot any Indians without due cause Colonel Johnson will see that you hang for it. We've got the safety of hundreds of white people to consider and we're not going to have them endangered by any recklessness of yours. You understand?"

Wolf shrugged his shoulders. "I reckon so," he muttered.

"All right, see that you heed." Rich turned

away from the men and greeted Jack. "And where are you bound, sir?" he asked smilingly.

"I'm looking for Colonel Johnson," returned Jack. "I'm looking for a young lady who was to have been left in his care. Have you heard anything about her?"

"A young lady?" The deputy stared; then he laughed. "No! I'm not young enough," he remarked, cryptically.

"Then, with your permission I'll just tag along after our crusty friends in the wagon."

The deputy hesitated. "I have no power to stop you," he said. "But you'd better wait here for Colonel Johnson."

"I can't. The matter is urgent. Come, Cato! So long, boys!" Jack nodded to the group around him, shook his bridle and cantered off after the wagon, which had just vanished among the trees.

CHAPTER V

THE close of the Revolution had brought no cessation of British intrigue along the northern frontier. The British did not believe the confederacy of states would endure. In any event the western frontier was uncertain; miles upon miles of territory—land enough for a dozen principalities—lay open to whoever should first grasp it. Treaties were mere paper; possession was everything. Colonization in western Canada had always lagged and the British could supply no white barrier to hold back the resistless tide that was rolling up from the south. But this very dearth of colonists was in a way an advantage, for it prevented the pressure on the Indians for lands that had caused perpetual war further south. Desiring to check the Americans rather than to advance their own lines the British, through McKee and other agents, poured out money to win the friendship of the Indians. Arms, ammunition, provisions, gewgaws in abundance were always ready. In the five years before the breaking out of the War of 1812 probably more than half the Indians about the Great Lakes had visited one British post or another in Canada and had come back home loaded with presents. The policy was wise, even if not humane.

When the conflict came it was to save Canada, which without Indian aid would have been lost forever to the British crown.

South of Canada, within the borders of the United States, ten thousand Indians hung in the balance, ready to be swayed by a hair. They were friendly to the British, and they hated the Americans. But they feared them, also—feared the men who had fought and bled and died as they forced their way westward past all resistance. Some would go north at the first word of war, but most would stay quiet, awaiting results.

The first British triumph; however small, would call hundreds of them to the British standard; a great British triumph would call them forth in thousands.

Tecumseh was the head and front of those Indians who favored war. For years he had urged that the red men should unite in one great league and should establish a line beyond which the white man must not advance. Behind this, no foot of land was to be parted with without the unanimous consent of all the tribes. Two long journeys had he made, travelling swiftly, tireless as a wolf, from one tribe to another, from Illinois to Virginia, from Florida to New York, welding all red men into a vast confederacy that in good time would rise against the ever-aggressive white man, crush his outposts, sweep back his lines, and establish a great

Indian empire that would hold him back forever.

A year before he had brought his plans nearly to perfection. He had accumulated great quantities of arms and ammunition and supplies at the town of his brother, the Prophet, on the banks of the Wabash, and had set out on his first long journey—a journey that was intended to rivet fast the league his emissaries had built. But he had gotten back to find that Harrison, the white chief, had struck in his absence, had defeated and scattered his chosen warriors, had destroyed his town, and had blotted out the work of three long years.

All afternoon long, from the protection of a nearby cabin, Alagwa watched that of Tecumseh, seeing the chiefs come and go. Simon Girty and the man in the red coat were among them.

When at last the sun was setting and the ridge poles of the cabin were outlined against the swirl of rose-colored cloud that hung in the west, Tecumseh sent for her.

Pushing through the mantle of skins that formed the door she found the great chief sitting cross-legged in the semi-gloom. Silently she sank down before him and waited.

For a long time Tecumseh smoked on in silence. At last he spoke, using the Shawnee tongue, despite the fact that he was a master of English and that Alagwa spoke it also, though not fluently. "Little daughter," he began. "For ten years you have

dwell in Tecumseh's cabin and have eaten at his fireside. The time has come for you to leave him and take a trail of your own."

Startled, with quivering lips and tear-filled eyes, Alagwa threw herself forward. "Why? Why? Why?" she cried. "What has Alagwa done that Tecumseh should send her away?"

"Alagwa has done nothing. Tecumseh does not send her away. And yet she must go. Listen, little daughter, and I will tell you a tale. Some of it you have heard already from the redcoat chief who spoke to you to-day against my will. The rest you shall hear now.

"Ten years ago, your father left you in my care. His name was Delaroche Telfair, a Frenchman, a Manaouioui. He came of a great chief's family, from far across the water. All the chiefs of his house are now dead and all their lands have come down to him and from him to you. If you were dead the lands would go to another chief—the chief Brito, who spoke to you to-day. Two moons ago this chief came to Tecumseh, seeking you and speaking fair words and promising all things. He is the servant of the British King and the ally of Tecumseh, and if Tecumseh were free to choose, he would have let you go with him gladly. But he is not free. Before your father died he warned Tecumseh against Brito, saying of him all things that were evil. He told also of the other chiefs of

his house who dwelt far to the south, near the great salt water and near the ancient home of the Shawnee people before they were driven northward by the whites. He begged that Tecumseh should put you in the care of these chiefs rather than in that of the chief Brito. Does my daughter understand?"

Alagwa bowed. "I understand, great chief," she answered, breathlessly.

"Therefore Tecumseh bade the chief Brito wait until he should return from a journey. He stationed the chief Wilwiloway to watch and protect you. For many moons he travelled. His moccasins trod the woods and the prairies. He visited the home of his friends' people by the far south sea. Of them one is a young white chief, handsome and brave and skilful, called Te-pwe (he who speaks truth) by the Shawnees. His years are four or five more than Alagwa's. Tecumseh saw him and gave him a belt of black and white and told him by what trail he should come to fetch you. The young chief took the belt and Tecumseh hoped to find him here when he came. But he has not come."

Alagwa's breast was heaving. The suggestion that she was to be sent far south into the land of the Americans filled her with terror. She had been trained in the stoicism of the Indian and she knew that it was her part to obey in silence, accepting the words of the chief, but her white blood cried out in protest.

The chief went on. "Tecumseh has done what he can to keep his promise to his friend. But now Tecumseh's people call him and he must leave all else to serve them. To-night he holds a great council and to-morrow he and those who follow him go north to join the redcoats and fight against the Seventeen Fires (seventeen states). But before he goes he must decide what to do with Alagwa. He can not take her north with him. He can not leave her here, for that would be to give her to the chief Brito whether he wished it or not and whether she wished it or not. Two things only can he do. He can give her into the hands of her father's foe or he can send her south to meet the young white chief, who is on his way to fetch her. Which shall he do, little daughter?"

Alagwa sat silent. Scarcely breathing, she strove desperately to think, to choose between the courses of action that Tecumseh had outlined, but the throbbing of her pulses made the task difficult. In her ears was the roaring of deep waters.

Suddenly a flush of rage swept over her and she sprang to her feet. "I will not! I will not!" she panted. "Am I a dog that I should go begging to the doors of the Long Knives from the south. They are my people's foes and mine. I will take nothing from them. Neither will I go north with the man whom my father hated. I can not stay here, the great chief says? Good! I will go, but

I will go to fight his foes and mine. I am a woman and I can not travel the warpath. But surely there is some other way for me to help? Can not the great chief lay upon me some task? Is there not some service that I may render to him and to the people who took me in when I was a child and who have cared for me these many moons?" Imploringly the girl stretched out her hands.

It was long before Tecumseh answered. But at last he nodded. "It is just," he said. "Your father came to the Shawnees and the Shawnees took him in. He left you with the Shawnees, and the Shawnees have cared for you as one of themselves. Now the Shawnees are to fight for their lands and for the lands of their children and their children's children. It is right that you should help them."

Alagwa drew her breath sharply. "It is right," she echoed. "Let the white chief take my lands. I care nothing for them. My heart is not white. It is red, red.

Tecumseh smiled. "Truly have the people named you Bobapanawe (Little Lightning)," he said slowly. "And yet—Let not my daughter think that this is a small matter. It is a very great matter. If my daughter will——"

"Oh! I will! I will!" Alagwa's white blood spoke in her outcry. No Indian woman would have interrupted a chief.

Tecumseh did not resent the outcry. "If my

daughter will, she can go south, not as Alagwa, not as a Shawnee, but as a prisoner escaping from captivity. As such she can get and send word of the plans and doings of the whites to Tecumseh and the redcoats and so help the people who have fostered her! Will my daughter do this?"

Alagwa did not hesitate. To her all Americans were base and vile, robbers and thieves. "I will! I will," she cried.

"It is well. Perhaps my daughter may meet the young chief—If she does, let her join herself to him and follow him. He should not be far from Wapakoneta. All Americans are robbers and murderers at heart. But the young chief is not as bad as most of them. Alagwa can trust him."

But the girl shook her head stubbornly. "I will trust none of the Long Knives," she protested.

Tecumseh ignored the refusal. "If you go south as a spy you can not go as an Indian, nor even as a woman," he said. "You must go as a white and as a boy. So shall you pass through perils that would otherwise overtake you. To-night there will be a great council. Wait till it is over. Then dress yourself from the clothes yonder"—he pointed to a heap at the side of the cabin—"and go to the squaw Wabetha and tell her to cut your hair and to wash the paint from your cheeks and to dress you as a boy. Let no one see you, for your enemies keep close watch. The chief Wilwiloway

will come for you at dawn and will go with you to the bend of the Piqua and perhaps farther. Then you must shift for yourself. From time to time I will send a runner to bring back the information you gain."

Alagwa bowed. "It is well," she said.

The chief slipped his hand into the braided pouch that hung at his side and drew forth a small packet wrapped in doeskin. From it he took a flat oval case containing the miniature of a lady with a proud, beautiful face, a chain so finely woven that the links could scarcely be distinguished, and a packet of gold coins whose value even Alagwa—child of the forest though she was—well knew. All of them he handed to the girl.

"Your father left them," he said. "Spend the money, but keep the picture safe. Your father said it would prove your rights if need be. Hang it around your neck by the chain and show it to no one till you must. Now, farewell."

CHAPTER VI

LITTLE sleep was there for anyone in the Shawnee camp that night. Hour after hour the witchdrums boomed and the leaping ghost fires flamed to the far-off blinking stars. Hour after hour the thunderous chanting of the braves shivered through the forest, waking the resting birds and scaring the four-footed prowlers of the night. Hour after hour the chiefs debated peace and war, now listening to the words of the redcoat emissary of the British king, now hearkening to Tecumseh, now turning ear to Catahecas (Black Hoof) or to Wathethewela (Bright Horn), as they spoke for peace, declaring that the British would fight for a time and then go away, but that the Long Knives from the south would stay forever. Hour after hour the wheeling stars, a silver dust behind the chariot of the moon, rose, passed, and sank. Hour after hour the mounting mists of the Black Swamp wavered and fell back, driven away by the heat of the fires and the hot breaths of the warriors. Dawn was breaking in the east as Tecumseh and his devoted few struck their hatchets into the war post and left the council to prepare for their northward venture, leaving the bulk of the Shawnees loyal to the Seventeen Fires.

Long before this, Alagwa had sought Wabetha, wife of Tecumseh, and had told her the will of the great chief. In the privacy of the lodge she had dropped her Indian garments from her one by one, till she stood revealed in the firelight, a slender shape amazingly fair compared to the red tints of the Indians. Wabetha, softly marvelling over the ever-new wonder of her white beauty, had hacked at the two heavy plaits of burnished hair till they fell like two great snakes to the trampled clay of the floor, leaving the girl bare indeed. Then, one by one, she had clothed her in the unfamiliar garments of the whites, the strong calico shirt, the deerskin knee breeches, the leggings wrapped about each slender limb and bound at the top and at the bottom with pliant thongs, the high moccasins padded as a protection against the snakes that infested the whole region. When the squaw placed on her head the inevitable coonskin cap of the white hunter, it would have taken a sharp eye to suspect the sex of this Indian-trained daughter of the Huguenots. Straight as a fir and supple as a willow, retaining longer than most of her sex the slender lines of childhood, she hid all feminine curves beneath the loose garb of the woodsman.

When, with the first peep of dawn Wilwiloway came slipping through the rolling mists to scratch at the cabin door, she was ready, her good-bys said. Without a word she fell in at his heels and

together they took the long trail south, the trail whose only end, so far as known to her, would be beneath alien stars at the borders of a sea unknown.

Wilwiloway moved cautiously. No sign of danger was visible, but he was too well versed in the war trail not to know that the unseen danger is ever the deadliest. Alagwa followed, also cautiously, not because she feared, for she did not, but because she had been trained to obey the will of the leaders. Close at Wilwiloway's heels she trod, putting her feet carefully into his footprints. Only once she paused, at the edge of the clearing, and looked backward at the vast wavering draperies of mist that hid the only home she could remember. Her eyes were dim and her cheeks wet, not merely from the clinging fingers of the fog, as she strove to penetrate the blanket of mist that hung before her. For a moment she gazed, then, with a choking sob, she hurried on.

Hour after hour the two sped southward. Neither spoke. Wilwiloway, at his great leader's command, was giving up the hope of his life, and was giving it up silently and stolidly, with Indian stoicism. Alagwa was giving up all she had known, all her friends, all the familiar scenes of her childhood.

And yet, after the first pang, her thoughts went forward, not backward, ranging into the strange new world into which she was hurrying. Alagwa was skilled in all forms of woodcraft; she could make

fire where a white man would freeze; catch game where he would starve; sleep warm and snug where he would shiver and rack with wet and fever and ague. She knew the forest trails, knew the rocks on which the rattlesnake sunned and the tufts of grass beneath which the copperhead lurked, knew the verdure that hid the quagmire, the firm-appearing ice that splintered at a touch, the tottering tree that dealt ruin at a breath.

But of the white man's ways she knew almost nothing. Before her father died he had taught her to speak French, but in the years that had passed since then she had nearly forgotten it. From one source or another, from Colonel Johnson and his family, from two or three prisoners, she had learned English—enough to understand if not enough to speak fluently. But other than this she knew nothing—except that there was a world of things to be known.

Much she wondered concerning the strange new life into which she was hurrying. Her woman's heart quaked at the dangers she must face, but her woman's soul, burning high with zeal to serve her people, bore her on. If for a moment the thought that she was to play a treacherous part, to worm her way into the Americans' confidence in order to betray them, came to vex her she drove it back. For years the Long Knives had cheated her people, had lied to them, had despoiled them, had slain

them. Treaty after treaty they had made, determining boundaries which they swore not to cross; and then, the moment they grew strong enough to take another forward step, they had broken their pledges and had surged forward, driving her people back. Treachery for treachery. Against such shameless foes all things were fair. If she could requite them some small proportion of the woe they had dealt out to her and hers she would glory in the deed. Afterwards, if they detected her they might slay her as they pleased—burn her at the stake if they would. She would show them how a Shawnee could die.

Concerning the man in the red coat she thought very little. She might have to think of him again at some time in the future, but for the moment he was one of the things she was leaving behind. He was an Englishman and therefore her ally, but he was her father's foe and therefore hers. After she had done her duty, after these shameless Americans had been driven back, after the hatchet had been buried in victory for her tribe, she would consider what he had offered. For the moment she merely wondered idly whether he had come to America really desirous of putting her in her place across the water or whether he had come in order to kill her and take her estates. Either alternative seemed entirely possible to Alagwa's Indian-trained mind. He was of her clan and therefore bound to aid her

loyally. But he was her father's foe and therefore was free to kill her and take her property. She would be slow to trust him. Fortunately she did not have to trust him now. It never once crossed the girl's mind that Captain Count Brito might wish to wed her rather than kill her or that by so doing he could easily get possession of her property. Among the Indians the lover gave presents to the father of his bride; he did not receive them with her.

But, concerning the young chief from the south of whom Tecumseh had spoken, she did think long and dubiously. Would she meet him among the whites to whom she was going and would she know him if she did meet him? Had he come to Ohio at all, or had his heart failed him as he faced the long trail to the north? Had he, like all other Americans, spoken with a forked tongue when he promised to come? Had he scorned his Indian-bred cousin, as she knew his people scorned the Indians?

And what was he like? Tecumseh had said that he was young, big, strong, and fair-haired. Methoataske, mother of Tecumseh, had spoken—Alagwa remembered it dimly—of a youth whom she had adopted into the Panther clan far away to the south at the edge of the Big Sea Water—a youth with blue eyes and yellow hair. Alagwa formed a picture in her mind.

Then she caught herself up angrily. After all, what did it matter. She was not going to meet this youth. Rather she would avoid him. His people were at war with hers. He was her enemy. She would think of him no more.

Abruptly Wilwiloway halted, stiffening like a hunting dog. Behind him Alagwa stopped in her tracks, poising as motionless as some wild thing of the forest, listening to a rattling and clinking that came from the narrow, vistaless road that stretched before her.

In a moment Wilwiloway turned his head. "White men come in wagon," he said. "Squaw stop here. Wilwiloway go see." He slipped into the bushes and was gone.

Alagwa, with the obedience ingrained into her since childhood, waited where she stood, peering through the green foliage that laced across her eyes.

Soon a wagon drawn by two mules clattered into the field of her vision. On the box sat a white man, driving, with a rifle across his knees. Beside the wagon walked another white man, with a rifle in the hollow of his arm. A little behind rode two other men; one, marvel of marvels, was neither red nor white, but black; the other—Alagwa caught her breath—was young and big and fair-haired.

Abruptly she saw Wilwiloway step into the road and throw up his hand. "Peace," he called. The

young man on horseback behind threw up his right palm in answer. "Peace," he answered, in the Shawnee tongue, smilingly.

But as he spoke Alagwa saw the white man on the box throw up his rifle with a meaning not to be mistaken. His action swept away her Indian training in a breath and she sprang forward with a shriek of warning.

Too late! The rifle spoke and Wilwiloway reeled backward, clutching at the air. Against a tree trunk he fell and held himself up, a dark stain widening swiftly upon the white of his shirt.

Alagwa saw red. Wilwiloway was her friend; all her life she had known him; he had loved her; he was being foully murdered. With a scream she snatched her hunting knife from her belt and dashed to his aid.

The man in the road saw her coming and fired. Alagwa knew that he had fired at her, but she did not mind. What she did mind was that she had stumbled on something, stumbled so violently that the shock sent her staggering backward. As she reeled, she saw the young man on the horse spurring forward.

Wilwiloway was still clinging to the tree. He saw the girl totter and the sight seemed to give him strength. With a yell of fury he leaped upon the man in the road, tore from his hands the yet smoking rifle, and struck with it once—a mighty

blow that sent the man crashing to the ground, a crimson furrow across his shattered skull.

Wilwiloway did not pause. Over the dead form of his enemy he sprang, leaping upward at the man on the box, to meet a crashing blow that hurled him backward and downward into the dust of the road.

With a whoop the man on the box sprang to the ground, knife in hand. An instant later he was up, waving a bloody trophy. He saw the girl still clutching at the air and rushed toward her.

Alagwa saw it all. Wilwiloway was dead, and she was at the mercy of her enemies. She could not even move; her legs had grown strangely heavy. But her spirit rose indomitably. Forgotten was her white ancestry; once more she was an Indian, trained in Indian ideals. Steadily she drew herself up, folded her arms across her breast, and stared unflinchingly at the coming death. She would show them how a Shawnee could die. Deliberately she began to sing the Shawnee death chant:

Behold, the water covers now our feet:
Rivers must we cross; deep waters must we pass.
Oh Kawas, hear: To thee we call. Oh come and aid us.
Help us through the stream to pass and forward go.

Here is the place we seek; here is our journey's end.
Here have we come; here is our journey's end.

Her sight was failing, but she sang on. Dimly she saw the white man with the hunting knife and behind him the young white chief on his horse coming like a thunderbolt. She did not heed them. Round her cool green waves were rising; the forest was stretching out its arms to pillow her.

Then came a shock. The young white chief had driven his horse against the man on the ground, hurling him backward. "Stop! you d—d butcher," he yelled. "Don't you see it's a white boy!" He leaped from his horse and caught the girl as she fell.

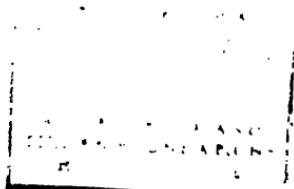
The touch roused Alagwa to sudden blind terror and she began to struggle furiously, striking with soft, harmless hands. Then abruptly a voice sounded in her ear—a voice gentle yet strong, whimsical yet comforting.

"It's all right, youngster," it said. "It's all right. Nobody's going to hurt you. We're white men—friends! friends! There now, boy, be still!"

The girl's eyes lifted to the face that hung above her. Feverishly they roved over the broad brow, the fair curling hair, the whimsical blue eyes, the smiling yet pitiful mouth. As she read their message terror slipped from her, her strained limbs relaxed, a sense of peace and safety came over her, and she drifted away on a sea of blessed unconsciousness.



ALAGWA, BEING WOUNDED, IS RESCUED BY JACK TELFAIR



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CHAPTER VII

SLOWLY the girl came back to life. Even after she regained consciousness she lay with closed eyelids, conscious only of a dull pain that throbbed up and down her right leg. When at last she opened her eyes she found herself lying upon her back, staring upward at a canvas top that arched above her. At her feet, she could see a mass of tree trunks and interlaced branches, beyond which gleamed a speck of blue sky. Weakly she turned her head to right and to left, and saw that she was lying on a rough bed in a wagon that was piled high with boxes and bales. Wonderingly she stared, not understanding.

Suddenly memory returned. The canvas top dissolved before her eyes. Once more she saw the plodding mules, the white men on box and ground, the smoking rifles, the brief combat, the fall of Wilwiloway. A spasm of fury swept over her, shaking her with its intensity. Her teeth ground together; her fingers clinched until the nails bit into the soft palms.

Wilwiloway was dead! Wilwiloway, the kind, the brave, the generous, was dead, foully and treacherously murdered by the white men who had despoiled her people and had driven them step by step

backward from the Ohio to the great lake. For years she had been taught to hate the whites, to believe them robbers and murderers. And now she had the proof!

Oh! How she hated them! How she hated them! If the chance ever came she would take a revenge that would make the blood run cold.

If the chance ever came! The thought brought her back to her surroundings. What was she doing in this wagon? Who had put her there? What were they going to do with her? Cautiously she raised her head. No one seemed to be near. Perhaps she could escape!

With an effort she tried to raise herself, but the motion sent the blood rushing to her brain and woke the dull pain in her leg to a sudden swift agony that made her drop back, half fainting. Setting her teeth against the pain she put down her hand and found that the legging had been removed from her right leg and that the limb itself had been bandaged half way below the knee. She felt for her hunting knife and found it gone! Despair rushed over her and she threw her hands to her face, trying to choke back the dry sobs that shook her.

As she lay, overwhelmed, a dry branch cracked outside the wagon and a blustering voice broke the silence. Alagwa did not understand half the words, but she caught the purport.

"Here! What the h—l are you trying to do," demanded the voice. "Gimme back that rifle."

For a moment silence reigned. Then another voice—a voice cool and deliberate—made answer. Alagwa had heard that voice only once, but she knew it instantly for that of the young white chief who had comforted her just before she sank into unconsciousness.

"No!" he said. "I won't give it back to you. You are under arrest. You have committed a brutal murder which may rouse all the friendly Indians against us and may cost the lives of hundreds of white men, women, and children. If your errand were not so urgent I'd take you back to Piqua and turn you over to Colonel Johnson. But the men at Fort Wayne need your ammunition. So I'm going to take you to Girty's Town and if I don't find Colonel Johnson there I'll leave word for him and take you on to Fort Wayne and turn you over to the authorities there to be dealt with according to law."

The man laughed scornfully. "You think you're right much of a much, don't you?" he sneered. "Take me to Fort Wayne, will you? All right! That's where I'm bound for. But if you reckon anybody there's going to do anything about my shootin' an Injun, you're all-fired wrong. Do anything? Lord! Yes! They'll do somethin'. They'll give me a prize."

"All right! They'll do as they please. I'm going to do my part. Now, hand over that knife in your belt."

The man laughed scornfully. "I'll see you d—d first," he gritted.

"Oh! no! You won't. Pass it over. Quick, now." The voice was chill and definitive. Then came a pause. Alagwa could imagine the two men facing each other in the brief mental struggle that would break the nerve of one of them forever. At last came the other man's voice, still surly but with all the backbone gone out of it. "Take it, d—n you," he growled.

"Very well! Now listen. We've got to go through Girty's Town, where we'll probably meet the friends of the Shawnee you murdered. If I told them the truth you'd never get through alive. So I'm going to lie for you. I'm going to throw all the blame on your dead friend. Understand?"

The man muttered something that Alagwa could not hear.

But the answer came quick. "That'll do!" ordered the chill young voice. "You're a prisoner. You don't give advice, you obey orders. You'll do as I say till we get to Fort Wayne and you'll do it quick. Moreover, I don't propose to carry you as a passenger. You'll do your work right along. Now climb on that box and start."

The man snarled, but climbed upon the box.

Alagwa felt the wagon sway to his weight. She felt that he was looking at her through the narrow half-circle in the canvas-closed front, and she closed her eyes. The next instant she heard his voice:

“What you going to do with this d— half-breed?” he demanded.

“Half-breed! That boy’s as white as you—and whiter. You keep away from him or you’ll reckon with me. Understand?”

“Well! I ain’t hurtin’ him none, am I?” The man gathered up the reins. “You don’t need be so durned cantankerous. I just asked what you was going to do with him.”

“I’m going to take him to Girty’s Town and see if I can find his friends. If I can’t find them I’ll take him on to Fort Wayne.”

“Humph!” The man lashed the unoffending mules with his whip. “Git up there!” he ordered. Then he spoke over his shoulder. “All right,” he said. “You’ll do as you want, I reckon. If I had the say I’d kick him out durned quick. An’ I’m tellin’ you you’ll be blamed sorry before you git shut of him. Breed or no breed, he’s been brought up among the Injuns or I ain’t no judge, an’ he’ll never be no good. Them Injun-bred boys never are. He’ll turn on you like a snake in the grass. You hear me.”

With a jerk and a jolt the wagon rolled off. The motion sent little thrills of pain through the girl’s

bullet-pierced leg, but the turmoil in her mind prevented her heeding them. Desperately she tried to control her thoughts. First, her disguise had held good. The white men thought she was a boy. Well and good; that was what she wanted them to think.

If they had not found her out when she was unconscious and at their mercy, they would probably not do so soon. Her entry among them had not been auspicious, but at least it had been made—and made in a way that banished the last shred of hesitation from her heart. They were all robbers and murderers; gladly would she slay them all.

But how was she to do it? Tecumseh had told her that runners would come to her from time to time to get any information she might have. But who were these runners; Tecumseh had not told her; Wilwiloway had not told her. Perhaps the latter had meant to do so, but had waited until it was too late. Perhaps, after all, it was not necessary that she should know them; they would know her and would come to her.

But could they find her? Surely Tecumseh had contemplated no such occurrence as that which had taken place. Her trail would be broken; the runners might not find her; her mission would be a failure. She must watch and wait and snatch at any chance to send tidings.

But what were the white men going to do with

her? Evidently they were divided in opinion. One of them—the man on the box, the man who had murdered Wilwiloway—would have slain and scalped her if he had not been prevented; he still hated her and would maltreat her if he dared. The other, the young white chief with the blue eyes—Alagwa wondered whether he could be her kinsman from the far south—wished her well. He had protected her. Passionate gratitude rose in the girl's heart, but she choked it back. He belonged to the hated white race; and she—her skin might be white, but her heart was red, red, red!

A thudding of hoofs in the dust came from behind the wagon and a horse thrust his head beneath the arched top. Behind it appeared the face of the young white chief, peering into the shadowy depths of the wagon. From behind the veil of her long lashes Alagwa watched him.

A moment later he drew back, but his voice came distinctly to the girl's ears. "He hasn't moved, Cato," he said. "I don't wonder. Poor little devil! He must have lost half the blood in his little body. I wonder who in thunder he is? He's no half-breed, I'll warrant."

"Ha'f-breed? Ha'f-breed? You mean ha'f-Injun, Mars' Jack? No, suh, he ain't no ha'f-breed, he ain't. He's quality, sure. He's got de littlest hands and feet I ever see'd on a man. He ain't no half-strainer, he ain't." Words, accent, and intona-

tion were all strange to the girl; she understood only that the man was speaking of her and that his tones were friendly.

The other's answer came promptly. "Oh! Yes! He's of good stock, all right," he said. "But confound it, who *is* he? And where in thunder did he come from? Was he with that Indian or was he trying to get away from him? And what in thunder did he come bounding out of those bushes for just in time to stop a bullet? I wish he'd wake up and tell us about himself."

Cato's voice came again. "He sure do look mighty white, Mars' Jack," he commented. "You reckon he gwine die?"

"Die nothing! The wound isn't anything. But he's lost a lot of blood and he's got to be looked after. Confound it! It's bad enough to have to take charge of this wagon without having to look out for a fool boy into the bargain."

A fool boy! Indignation swelled in the girl's bosom. A fool boy, indeed. What right had he—

But the voice went on and she listened. "Confound those infernal fools that had to go shooting down an Indian just because he was an Indian."

Cato's reply came slowly. "You sure dat Injun gem'man didn't mean no harm, Mars' Jack?" he questioned, doubtfully.

"Mean any harm! Why, he had made the peace

sign and had dropped his rifle. It was sheer murder to shoot him, and I'm mighty glad he took his vengeance before he died. But I'll have the dickens and all of a time explaining to the chiefs at Girty's Town."

"Girty's Town! Whar dat, Mars' Jack?"

"That's a Shawnee village just ahead here. There's no way around it and we've got to go through it."

"You—you gwine drive right through without stoppin', Mars' Jack, ain't you, suh?"

"No! I'm going to report what has happened. I've got to set things right. The Indians about here are supposed to be friendly and I've got to do what I can to keep them so. War hasn't begun yet, and anyway, I'm here on invitation from Tecumseh himself."

Cato's teeth began to chatter. "You—you ain't gwine into dat Injun village and tell 'em about what done happen, is you, Mars' Jack?" he faltered.

"Certainly I am. I've got to see that this ammunition gets through safely to Fort Wayne, haven't I? Our men will need it soon. I don't want to go there. I want to go to Wapakoneta and get Miss Estelle. But I've got to go. So the best I can do is to see Colonel Johnson, or send him word about this business and send Tecumseh word that I'm coming back as quick as I can to redeem my promise."

Alagwa understood not more than half of what she heard, but she gathered its purport. Jack's last words settled his identity once for all. Beyond a doubt he was the young white chief from the south. She understood, too, that he had had no part in the killing of Wilwiloway and that he was glad that the murderer had been punished. A soft comfort stole into the girl's heart as she realized that she would have no blood feud against him. She had only to call to him and to show him the trinkets that Tecumseh had given her, and all would be well. Impulsively she opened her mouth to speak; then closed it again. What was she doing? Had she forgotten her mission? Had she forgotten the slaying of Wilwiloway? Was his murderer to go unpunished? No! A thousand times! No!

Jack's voice broke in on her thoughts. "There's Girty's Town just ahead," he remarked. "See that your scalp is tight on your head, Cato."

Girty's Town! The words struck the girl like a blow. For the first time she realized that the wagon was taking her, not toward Piqua, not toward the camps of the white men for which she had set out, but away from them, back toward Girty's Town and the St. Marys river. Often had she visited Girty's Town and well she knew all the two score Shawnees who dwelt within it. Her revenge was ready to her hand; in a moment she would be in the midst of the warriors; then she would have only

to rise in her place and call to them that Wilwiloway had been murdered, foully and treacherously, and that she herself had been shot by the man on the box, and they would hurl themselves upon him and drag him down. Her blood ran hot at the thought.

Then suddenly it cooled. The young white chief would not stand tamely by while his prisoner was killed. He would fight! He would fight hard. He would kill many of her people. But he would be pulled down at last and—and—No! Not that! Not that! Her revenge must wait.

Besides, Tecumseh had not sent her south to fight but to spy. If she called for vengeance on the murderer of Wilwiloway she betrayed herself and wrecked her mission. No! she must wait. There would be other chances.

But her friends in the village would know her! What would she say to them? Abruptly she remembered the saving grace of her costume. All the Indians knew her as a girl with painted cheeks, fillet-bound forehead, and long braids of hair. Not one had seen her in shirt and breeches with clean-washed cheeks and short hair that curled upon her forehead. In such a guise perhaps even their sharp eyes might fail to recognize her.

The road grew smoother and she realized that the wagon was within the village. A moment later it halted and the pad of running feet and the murmur of voices arose about it. Jack's voice arose,

telling of what had happened and expressing his regret, but presenting the facts so as to screen the living murderer and lay the blame on the dead man.

A small hole in the canvas cover of the wagon was close to her face. She glanced toward the man on the box and saw that he was cowering back, listening with strained ears to Jack's words and paying no attention to her movements. Gingerly she moved till her eye was at the hole.

"I know not the name of the dead chief," Jack finished. "But I saw upon his breast a token like to that upon my own." He tore open his shirt and disclosed a mark, at sight of which a chorus of gutteral exclamations arose. "Great is my grief," he went on, "that the chief is slain. He, however, took vengeance before he died. He killed the man who killed him. I go now to Fort Wayne in the service of the Great White Father. In three days I will return to speak more fully of this before the white chief, Colonel Johnson."

For a moment there was silence, then an Indian—Alagwa knew him as Blue Jacket, friend of the whites—stepped forward. "My brother speaks well," he said. "Far be it from me to doubt my brother's word. But some of my tribe have dug up the hatchet. If my brother goes now, perhaps the white men will say that the rest of us are snakes in the grass and that we lay in wait for the white man and slew him. Perchance they may descend

upon our village in wrath and may drive our young men to take the war-path. Will not my brother stay and speak with a straight tongue to our father, Colonel Johnson?"

Jack shook his head. "I can not stay," he answered. "I must hurry to Fort Wayne. The Seventeen Fires command it. But I will leave a letter for Colonel Johnson. I will tell him that your hearts are good. If you will take it to him all will be well."

The chief grunted with approval. "My brother speaks well," he said. "We will send the letter to Colonel Johnson, who is even now at Wapakoneta. Some of my young men shall bring in the bodies for him to see."

Jack took a notebook from his pocket and wrote an account of the tragedy of the morning on two of its pages. These he tore out and handed to Blue Jacket. "This will make all safe!" he said.

The chief took it with grave thanks. "All shall be as my brother says," he promised.

Jack nodded. "It is well," he said. "Now one other thing I would ask. I come hither at the request of Tecumseh, to take council with him concerning a great matter. Will you bear him word that I am called away on duty but will return in five days."

The chief shook his head. "I can not. Tecumseh

has gone north with many braves. Already he is far away!"

"Humph!" Jack's face fell. He had counted on finding Tecumseh and receiving the girl from his hands. Just what to do he did not know. If Tecumseh had gone north to join the British, war must be even nearer at hand than he had supposed. Perhaps it had already begun. Whether it had or not his first duty was to the country; he must make sure that the ammunition reached Fort Wayne safely; all private affairs must wait on that! Yet his anxiety as to the girl was growing fast.

"Let my brother listen," he said. "A month ago a runner from Tecumseh came to me where I dwelt far away on the big sea water to the south. He sent me this belt"—Jack held out the belt—"and he called upon me as a member of the Panther clan, raised up by his mother, Methoataske, to come to Wapakoneta and receive there at his hands a white maiden, Alagwa by name, a kinswoman of my own, who had dwelt in his lodge since the death of her father, the chief Delarache. Knows my brother of this maiden?"

Blue Jacket bowed. "I know her," he said.

Jack resumed. "For her I come," he said. "But I find Tecumseh gone. Know you where he has placed the maiden?"

Blue Jacket did not answer at once. Apparently he was turning the matter over in his mind. Through

the hole in the canvas Alagwa watched him narrowly, hanging on his words quite as anxiously as did Jack. At last he beckoned a boy to his side and gave him instructions in a low voice. Then he turned to Jack.

"The maiden was at Wapakoneta in Tecumseh's lodge yesterday," he said. "I would say that she was there still but that another white chief—a chief from the north wearing a red coat—came to me an hour ago from Wapakoneta asking tidings of her."

"A white chief? In a red coat?" Jack gasped. The redcoat officer could be only Brito, but that he should dare to come down from Canada in the existing state of international affairs took Jack's breath away. "Did he find her?" he asked. "Where is he?"

"He has not found her. He is still here. I have sent for him." Blue Jacket pointed. "He comes!" he finished.

Advancing through the Indian village came a big man in the uniform of a British officer. Alagwa recognized him instantly as he who had claimed kinship with her only the day before. Easily and gracefully he strode along the path toward the wagon. As he drew near his eyes singled out Jack.

"Ah!" he said, halting. "You have news of the girl, fellow? Let me have it at once!"

Jack flushed hotly. He was young—not half the

age of the man who was addressing him—and he lacked the easy assurance that the other had gained by years of experience in the great world. Bitterly he resented Captain Brito's tones, but he tried to keep himself in check. He must uphold the blood of the American Telfairs but he must not play the boor before this fashionable cousin of his.

"Your pardon, sir!" he said, deliberately, "but to whom have I the honor of speaking?" In his voice was an uncontrollable catch, born of excitement.

Captain Brito stared. "Well! I'm d—d," he exclaimed, laughing shortly. "If the fellow doesn't take himself seriously! Come! My good man; I haven't time for nonsense. Where is the girl?"

Jack met his eyes squarely. His agitation was dying away and his nerves were momently steady-ing. "First, you will please to answer my ques-tion," he said. "Who are you?"

A snarl curled Captain Brito's lips, and his breath quickened a little. "Damnation!" he began. Then he caught himself up. Jack's eyes were chill, and the captain apparently decided that compliance would quickest gain his ends.

"I am Captain Count Telfair," he said, "of His Majesty's Forty-First Foot. Now, sir, your news!" He drew out a purse. "You will be well paid for it," he finished contemptuously.

Jack paid no attention to the last words. His

flush had faded and his cheeks were very white. "I am Jacqueline Telfair, of Alabama," he said, deliberately; "and I demand to know the errand that brings a British officer into American territory at this time."

Captain Brito's eyes widened with astonishment. "Well! I'm cursed," he gasped. Then, with a sudden change of tone, he went on: "Can it be possible that I have chanced upon my American cousin? Yes! Yes! Now that you tell me, I do see the family features. We have ever run close to type, we Telfairs; even in America"—Captain Brito grunted—"you have kept the likeness. I'm glad to meet you, cousin!" He held out his hand.

Jack took it. But his face did not lighten. "And I you," he said courteously, but not enthusiastically. "As a kinsman I am glad to welcome you to America. But as an American I am obliged to repeat my question. What are you, a British officer, doing here in Ohio?"

Captain Brito shrugged his shoulders. "Egad!" he said. "You are"—he paused; a startled expression came upon his face. "Has war been declared?" he demanded, eagerly.

"Not that I know of!" Jack spoke coldly. "If it had been, I should be compelled to arrest you out of hand, cousin or no cousin." Captain Brito laughed shortly, but Jack did not pause. "But it is well known that British emissaries are in this

country trying to stir up the Indians to war against the whites. If you are one of those devils——”

“ You would feel it your duty to arrest me. Egad! Mr. Jacqueline Telfair, paragon of all the virtues, I almost wish I were one of those patriotic and self-sacrificing servants of His Majesty, so as to put your fine ideas of duty to the test. Unfortunately, I can claim no such honor. I am here on a private matter—By God!” Captain Brito broke off, staring.

“ Well, sir!”

“ Of course!” Captain Brito began to laugh softly. “ Of course! I was a fool not to guess sooner. You are after the girl, the heiress! Well! Well! To think of it! You virtuous Americans seem to be as keen after the dollar as we “ devils of Englishmen! ”

Jack did not even flush. He attempted no denial. “ Her father, Delaroche Telfair, hated you and your house,” he said, coldly. “ He foresaw that his daughter might inherit the French estates. At any rate he swore that his daughter should never fall into your hands, and he warned Tecumseh against you. Perhaps he was wrong, but that is what he did, and both Tecumseh and I respect his wishes. At all events the girl shall not be driven or humbugged into marriage with you if I can prevent it. She shall have free choice after she knows who she is and what she possesses.”

Jack's voice was steady and his eyes did not flinch. Uncompromisingly he faced the elder man, and the latter stared back as determinedly and far more fiercely.

Physically the two men looked not unequal. Their weight was practically the same. Captain Brito was heavier, but at least part of his weight was fat, and his movements were slower and less springy than Jack's. How the two compared in strength and in endurance only actual test could tell.

For a moment Brito said nothing. Then, suddenly he reached out his hand and clutched Jack by the shoulder, changing as he did so from the languid, supercilious gentleman to a devil with snarling lips. "Hark you! Young man," he grated. "Estelle Telfair is to be my wife. Understand that once for all! If you think to prevent it or to win her for yourself, abandon your plans and go back to your home if you love life. I am the head of the house. The estates should be mine and I intend to have them in spite of all the Americans out of h—l. I'll brook no interference from a boy like you—or from any one else. Understand?"

Jack flung the man off with a swing that sent him staggering backward, despite his height and weight. "That is as may be," he said steadily. "I accept your defiance and I am ready to go

further into it with you at any moment you desire." He leaned forward, his blue eyes flashing.

Captain Brito steadied himself. His breath was coming quickly. His hand closed on the hilt of his sword till his knuckles gleamed white. Then he shook his head.

"Not now," he said. "Your friends"—he glanced at the watching Indians—"are too numerous. They are too cowardly to follow Tecumseh northward to fight for their homes and liberty, but they are not too cowardly to join you against a single man. Besides, I have no time to waste on boys. Later—we will see. Remember, my warning stands."

Jack shrugged his shoulders. The honors, for the moment at least, were his. "I accept your statement that you are here only on personal business," he said, slowly. "Therefore I let you go. But I shall send word of your presence to Colonel Johnson and I doubt whether he will accept such an explanation. I advise you to be gone."

Brito laughed. He had regained much of his coolness. "Egad!" he said. "That's good advice! Au revoir, cousin, au revoir—till we meet again." With a wave of his hand he turned and strode away.

As he disappeared among the huts a voice struck on Jack's ear. "Talk! Talk! Talk!" it said. "Much palaver! And it never does no good. I

been a-listening and a-listening and you never got nowhere till he grabbed you and you flung him off. That brought the cuss to terms mighty quick. There ain't nothing like a little muscle to clear up trouble. I thought for a minute he was a-going to fight. Lord! I'd 'a liked to seen a fight between you two. It would be——”

“Rogers!” Jack broke in on the old man's monologue; a solution of the problem that was troubling him had suddenly dawned. “I'm glad to see you. Can you do something for me?”

“I reckon so. I told you I could guide you——”

“All right. I'll engage you.” Jack drew out his purse. “Here's two months' pay in advance. Hunt up Colonel Johnson and tell him all you've heard—about my cousin, Miss Estelle Telfair, and about this British officer and all. Ask him to find her and care for her till I get back from Fort Wayne. Put yourself under his orders and do just as he says. I'll be back in about a week.”

The old hunter nodded. “I'll do it,” he declared. “Money talks in Ohio same as elsewhere. And it talks a heap eloquenter than tongues——”

From the seat of the wagon Williams leaned forward. “Say, old man,” he called. “I want to speak to you before you go. I can't——”

“Ain't got time now. See you later.” Deliberately Rogers turned his back and trotted away.

Clearly he had not forgotten the slight that Williams had put upon him the day before.

Jack turned to Williams. "Go ahead," he ordered.

Alagwa started. Absorbed in the conversation, she had forgotten her own situation and the pressing need that she should get word of her movements to Tecumseh. Now abruptly she remembered. She was leaving Girty's Town without having been seen by any one. Clearly Jack had forgotten her. Not once in his talk with Blue Jacket had he mentioned her part in the tragedy of the morning. He had asked no one to identify her. In another moment she would be gone. Her trail would be broken and the runners from Tecumseh would be unable to pick it up. Anxiously, she rolled back from the peep hole and half raised herself, hesitating whether to call out. Then she stopped with a gasp.

At the rear of the wagon, looking in, stood an Indian. How long he had been there she did not know; but as her eyes met his he made a swift sign for silence.

"Tecumseh send. I follow," he muttered, in the Shawnee tongue. "Call like a whip-poor-will when you want." Another moment and he was gone.

Alagwa dropped back on her couch and closed her eyes and lay still. As the wagon rolled away her heart was beating high. The runners had found her. The broken trail was whole again.

CHAPTER VIII

THE sun was visibly declining toward the west when the wagon, driven by Williams and followed by Jack Telfair and Cato, rumbled out of Girty's Town and took the road down the St. Marys river.

The road led through the Black Swamp, that great morass of water-soaked quagmire that covered all northwestern Ohio, stretching forty miles from north to south and one hundred and twenty miles from east to west, from Fort Wayne to the Cuyahoga and the Western Reserve. All over it giant trees soared heavenward, springing from sunlight-starved ground on which no undergrowth could root. Between lay fallen limbs and rotting tree trunks, thick water-soaked moss, and carpets of moldering leaves, layer upon layer. No one that once crossed it ever forgot the treacherous quicksands that hid beneath the blighted plants, the crumbling logs half sunk in shiny pools where copperheads lay in wait, the low-hung branches that dripped moisture to the stunted vegetation, the clouds of venomous mosquitoes, the brilliant flies that clustered upon the dead even before it was dead, the labyrinths of tortuous runways. Except at midday no ray of sunlight ever penetrated the canopy of interlaced

branches that arched overhead and that, to a soaring bird, must have looked as solid and unbroken as a grassy field.

Underfoot the ground was spongy with standing water that moved sluggishly, if at all, through creeks and rivers almost level with the surface. Shallow pools, alive with water-snakes, were everywhere.

A few roads, so-called, ran through this swamp. Mad Anthony Wayne had chopped a way through it from Greenville to Fort Defiance, what time he crushed the Miamis' pride and retrieved Harmer's and St. Clair's defeats. Hull and his army were even then carving another road through it from Urbana to Detroit and disgrace and defeat. A third road, little more than a trail, followed down the Auglaize. Across these north-south passways ran the east-west road that Jack was following down the St. Marys, from Girty's Town to Fort Wayne.

The road was not much of a road. Rather, it was an Indian trail, broadened by white men, who had hewed down the great trees that had stood along it, making a rutted stump-encumbered mudhole-filled passage, through which a wagon must move slowly and perilously. Once started along it the teamster must go on. There was no place to turn aside and few places when it was possible to turn back.

Jack had no thought of turning back. He was pressing forward with feverish haste. Fort Wayne

was eighty miles away—a four days' journey which Jack hoped to make in three. He was wild to seek his kinswoman before it was too late. But he could not shirk his self-appointed task. The departure of Tecumseh and his braves for the north to join the British warned him anew that war was imminent and that ammunition might be sorely needed in the fort. As a matter of fact war had already been declared and couriers were speeding north, west, and south from Washington bearing the news. One was about to find General Hull at Fort Findlay, which he had just built in the middle of the Black Swamp.

Throughout the long afternoon Alagwa lay quiet in the wagon, steadily gaining her physical strength though not attaining any great degree of mental quietude. Her brain, in fact, was whirling. Within two days she had passed through experiences more outside her usual routine than she had undergone in all her life before. First had come Captain Brito with his claims of kinship and his tales of another land; then had followed Tecumseh's narration of the circumstances under which she had come under his care, her appeal to be allowed to help those who had helped her, and her assignment to duty; next had come her disguise, her start southward, its tragic ending and her finding of the young white chief, her kinsman; last had been the meeting of the two white men and the illuminating discourse

between them. Over all hung the memory of the runner who was trailing her through the forest, ready to bear her messages to Tecumseh and her friends.

Most of all her thoughts centered on Jack and Brito. Much of their talk she had been unable to understand, but certain parts of it had been burnt into her consciousness. First, she had great possessions—possessions greatly coveted by white men. Tecumseh had said that all white men would commit any crime to get wealth; and she had accepted his statement as a general fact not to be disputed. All her life she had been taught to believe it. And now these two white men, her kinsmen, had in a way confirmed it, for each clearly believed that the other was seeking her, not for her own sake, but for what was hers.

Could both be right, she wondered? Could both have bad hearts and forked tongues? She remembered that Captain Brito had not told her of her possessions but had pretended that he had come for her as a matter of duty. His words concerning this had been forked, and she found it easy to believe that they would be forked concerning other things. But the other—the young white chief! Was he false also? No doubt he was, she decided scornfully; his clear eyes and frank brow were merely a disguise behind which he could best gain his ends. All white men were bad and he was no exception. She

was a prisoner and she would probably be in his company for some time to come. By the aid of her boy's disguise (Ah! But she was thankful for it) she would find him out—would find that he, too, was seeking her for her wealth. Then she could hate him as she should.

Tired of lying prone she tried to sit up and managed to do so without feeling the access of dizziness and pain that had attended her former effort. She moved silently, as she had been trained to do by her life with the Indians, and her change of position did not attract the notice of Williams, who was driving stolidly along. Almost instantly, however, the rear of the wagon was darkened by a horse's head and above it she saw the smiling blue eyes of the young chief.

"Well, youngster!" he called, merrily. "How are you? Feeling better?"

Color flooded the girl's cheeks as she gazed at him. He was even pleasanter-looking than her memory had told her. From his broad forehead to his square, resolute chin and smiling, trustful mouth, he was all she could have hoped. She felt her carefully nurtured distrust melting and strove to call it back.

"Yes," she answered, with a sudden catch of her breath. "Yes. Better."

"That's good." Jack pushed back his hat and wiped away the perspiration that stood upon his

brow. "You are not much hurt, really," he went on. "The bullet cut the artery of your leg and you lost a whole lot of blood; in fact, you were pretty nearly drained dry before I could stop it. Except for that it didn't do much harm, and as soon as you get back your strength you'll be up and about."

The girl nodded slowly. "You are very good," she said.

Jack shrugged away her comment. "I didn't know where you were going," he insinuated, "or how you came to be where you were, but I couldn't stop, and of course I couldn't leave you, so I just bundled you into the wagon and brought you along. I was bound for Wapakoneta but I've had to turn off to Fort Wayne instead, so that's where we're going. I hope it meets your approval." He ended with a smile.

The girl understood that she was being questioned. She had determined what to say and she answered quickly, in fairly good English, noticing that Williams was listening as she spoke. "I come from Wapakoneta!"

Jack stared. "You mean you lived there with the Indians?"

"For many moons I have lived there. I know no other life but that."

"You were a prisoner?"

"Prisoner! No! Yes! Perhaps you call it so.

I think the Shawnees carry me away from somewhere when I am a child. I have lived with them ever since. They were good to me. I travel the long trail south with the chief Wilwiloway when that wicked white man kill him."

Jack's face darkened. "It was a brutal murder," he said, sharply, glancing at Williams. "It shall be punished. But what is your name? Where do your friends live? Where do you want to go?"

The girl shook her head. "I do not know what my name was before I came to the Shawnees," she answered, slowly. "The Indians call me Bobapanawe."

"Bobapanawe. That means 'lightning,' doesn't it?" Jack laughed. "It suits you all right, but I'm afraid it's too much of a mouthful. I'll call you Bob, if you don't object. I suppose you don't know anything about your friends?"

The girl shook her head. "I have no friends except among the Shawnees," she answered. "Perhaps I had better go back to them." As she spoke she half closed her eyes, but through her long, curling eyelashes she watched Jack's face.

"Go back to the Indians! Great Scott! You can't do that."

"But where then shall I go?"

"Well——" Jack scratched his head—"we'll have to think about that. Maybe we'll be able to

find out something about your people when we get to Fort Wayne."

The wagon had been moving slower and slower, the tired mules showing little desire to hasten. As Jack finished speaking they stopped short, and Williams turned around.

"Say!" he said. "These mules are plumb wore out. We got to stop unless you want to kill 'em."

Jack rode to the front of the wagon and stared ahead through the dimming corridors of coming night. All afternoon the wagon had been moving through a deepening gloom, and now the darkness seemed to have shut down. One single patch of blue sky, far ahead, told where the road came out for a moment on the bank of the river, and showed that the sun had not yet set.

"There seems to be an opening a couple of hundred yards ahead," he said. "We'll stop there. Drive on if you can."

Williams cracked the whip and shouted, but the tired mules refused to respond, until Cato came forward.

"Dat ain't no way to treat a mule, massa," he said. "Lemme try what I can do, massa, please do, suh."

Williams flung down the reins and jumped from the wagon to the ground. Anger and fear had sadly frayed his temper. "Try what you d— please," he growled, and walked ahead, leaving Cato to coax

the mules to a fresh effort that brought the wagon at last to the spot that Jack had selected.

As the wagon stopped, Jack went to the back. "Come out, youngster," he ordered, kindly. "It'll do you good to stand and move about a little." He held out his arms as he spoke.

But the girl shrank back. "I can get out alone," she faltered.

Jack grinned. "All right!" he agreed, cheerfully. "Try it if you like. I'll catch you if you fall." He stood back and waited.

Cautiously the girl clambered out and down. She reached the ground safely, but as her weight came upon her wounded leg, she tottered and would have fallen if Jack had not caught her and held her up, while the swimming world spun round.

Her pride vanished and she clung to him desperately, feeling again the curious sense of safety that she had felt when he had held her a few hours before. She clung fast until the rush of blood to her temples quieted; then, as she straightened herself, she heard Jack's voice.

"Bravo!" he cried. "You're doing fine. Just a step or two—a step or two. There! That's it." She felt herself lowered to a seat upon a great limestone boulder that protruded from the mold close against a big tree. "How does your wound feel now?"

"Good!" The girl stretched her leg cautiously.

"I guess I'd better not disturb the dressings to-night," went on the boy, doubtfully. "I did the best I could this morning, and it would probably do more harm than good to fool with them. What do you think."

"Wound does very well." Not for worlds would Alagwa have submitted it to his inspection.

Jack slipped away and the girl leaned back against the tree and looked about her curiously. The outer world, dark as it was with the shadows of coming night, looked good to her after the long hours she had spent in the gloom of the wagon. Fresh blood was filling her veins and her spirits were reviving. She had not forgotten Wilwiloway and his cruel murder, but her memory had been blurred both by weakness and by the rush of new sensations.

The spot, though by no means ideal for a camp, was probably the best that the region afforded. It was on a low ridge or dune of sand, part of an ancient beach heaped up when Lake Erie spread far beyond its modern bounds. It stood three or four feet instead of only as many inches above the sluggish river. On the near bank a giant oak, undermined by the stream through uncounted years, had toppled sideways until its branches swept the dark water. The sunlight had slipped in along the slit made by the river and had rested on the mold, stirring it to life. For a hundred feet or

more a thick mat of pea-vines and annis grass bordered the stream, and toward these the tired mules were straining, even while Cato was loosening their harness. Close beneath the leaning tree Jack was kindling a fire, small, after the Indian fashion, but sufficient for their needs. Williams was chopping down some bushes that had found lodgment on either side of the tree. No one was paying any attention to Alagwa.

Later, however, after Cato, who like most of his race was a born cook, had prepared the supper of wild turkey and fat bacon and cornpone, Jack glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. Then he called to Cato: "Fetch the grub over here, Cato," he ordered, pointing to the great boulder on which the girl sat. "This stone will do for a table."

Alagwa's heart warmed. Instinctively she knew that he had chosen the supper place for her convenience.

Night came on while they were eating. The red tints that stretched up from the west faded to palest gray. Closer and closer in drew the forest till it seemed to press like a wall upon the little band, blotting out their forms and leaving only the dim glimmer of their pale faces. Cato's darker skin hid altogether. Beneath the leaning trees the dying fire glowed like a red eye. To the south the strip of water reflected what little light was left.

With the closing in of the night the four grew very still, thinking their own thoughts and dreaming their own dreams.

Jack was pondering on his mission to Tecumseh and on his failure to reach the Indian chief. Had he done right, he wondered, to quit his chosen trail, especially in view of Brito Telfair's appearance on the scene? Could not Williams and his ammunition have reached Fort Wayne in safety without his aid? Would Rogers be able to do anything? Suppose he should never find this kinswoman of his? Suppose she lost her life by reason of his delay? For a moment his turning aside looked to him unnecessary, ridiculous, quixotic. Then he set his teeth. No! He had done right. Fort Wayne was of enormous importance to the country; on its holding might depend the safety of the whole northwest. The government had been mad to send ammunition without adequate escort through a possibly hostile country, but the madness of the government did not excuse him from doing what he could to retrieve the blunder and to stop the frightful consequences that might easily result from the murder of the Shawnee.

Williams had been moving uneasily; he had had time to meditate on his position, and he had lost much of his confidence. Abruptly he spoke. "Say!" he said. "Can't we fix this thing up before we get to Fort Wayne? 'Spose I did do wrong

in shootin' that Injun? 'Spose he did make a peace sign? I'd didn't know it. He jumped outer those bushes and flung up his hand an' I thought he was goin' to jump us, an' I banged loose without stoppin' to think. It was my fault. I'll own up. But it's done an' can't be undone. What's the use of stirrin' things up?"

Jack did not answer for a time. At last he spoke slowly, with the uncompromising severity of youth. "You committed a wanton murder," he said, "a murder that caused the death of two men. It may be that you will get off scot free, considering the state of affairs. I rather think you will. But if you do, I tell you frankly it will be by no aid of mine. Now, you and Cato had better lie down and get some sleep. It's late and we must start early tomorrow. I'll keep watch."

Williams obeyed promptly, though surlily, slouching off to his blanket beneath the great leaning tree.

Alagwa stared after him. "Will you not tie him?" she asked, incredulously.

Jack chuckled. "Not I," he said. "If he wants to slip away in the night, let him. It would save me some trouble. Go to bed, Cato."

Cato, however, demurred. "Ain't you goin' to let me help you watch, Mars' Jack?" he questioned.

Jack looked at him and grinned. "Think you

can keep awake, Cato?" he asked. "Sure you won't get to thinking about Mandy or Sue and go to sleep?"

"Now, Mars' Jack, you knows mighty well——"
"I know mighty well you'll do your best, Cato. Go lie down, now. I'll call you at midnight and let you keep the midwatch."

When Cato had bedded himself down not far from Williams, Jack turned to Alagwa. "Are you ready for bed, youngster?" he asked. "If you're not too sleepy, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

Alagwa's heart fluttered. What did he want, this wonderful white man, this stranger who was yet a kinsman, this enemy with the friendly blue eyes? "I am not sleepy," she faltered.

"I won't keep you up long. You know Tecumseh, of course?"

Somehow the girl felt disappointed. "Yes," she said. "I know him."

"Then," Jack hesitated, "do you know a white girl that has grown up in his lodge—a girl a little older than yourself, I reckon. Her father died and left her with him about ten years ago. Do you know her?"

What possessed Alagwa, she never knew. Perhaps it was merely the eternal feminine instinct to mislead the male. Almost without hesitation she answered. "Yes," she said, slowly. "I have see her,

but men do not associate with squaws. I see her little."

"What does she look like?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "She is dark, very dark, darker than the Indians," she said. "She has black eyes and square face. I not know she is white till someone tell me. She look like a Shawnee."

Jack's face fell. "Oh! I say!" he exclaimed. "That's too bad. I was told that she was very pretty."

The girl's lip curled. "You not like her unless she is pretty?" she questioned, scornfully.

Jack laughed. "Of course, I'll like her whether she is pretty or not," he answered. "She is a cousin of mine, and I'll like her whatever she looks like. Do you know where she is now?"

Alagwa hesitated. "I see her yesterday at Wapakoneta," she answered.

"You did! Then Tecumseh did not take her with him?"

"No, Tecumseh took only warriors. Women do not go on the warpath. Why do you seek her?"

The night had grown lighter. A silvery glimmer, resting on the tops of the trees above the river, showed that the moon was mounting. Against the sky the nearer branches waved gently, ebony laced on silver. Stray moonbeams spotted the lower branches.

Jack stared at the mirror-like water for some time before he answered. At last, quite simply, he told the story. "You see, it's a point of honor," he finished. "Our branch is bound to help her branch, when need arises, just as Indian clan-brothers must help each other—a Wolf a Wolf, and a Panther a Panther. The Telfairs were a great house in France in their day, and this girl has great lands there. It is my duty to see that she comes to her own."

"But—but you do not seek her. You turn away and leave her."

"Don't I know it?" Jack's tones were desperate. "When I think—But I can't help it. There are five thousand white women and children along this frontier whose lives might pay the forfeit if Fort Wayne should fall. And without the ammunition in this wagon—Oh! I've been over the problem again and again and there's only one answer. I've got to get this wagon to Fort Wayne first and look for the girl afterwards. As soon as I have done that I will go back to hunt for her. Meanwhile I've sent word to Colonel Johnson and I've commissioned Tom Rogers to help him."

Feeling, strong and intense, spoke in the boy's tones. Alagya could not mistake it. A sudden intense desire for his friendship possessed her. She wanted—oh! how she wanted to be cared for by one

of her blood. "And—and what of me?" she faltered.

"You?" The sudden turn in the talk took Jack by surprise. "You? Why? I reckon we'll learn something about your friends at Fort Wayne and—"

"No! No! I have no friends." The girl's tones were full of tears.

Jack put out his hand quickly. "Yes, you have, you poor little devil," he declared. "You've got one friend, anyhow. I'll see that you're provided for, whatever comes!"

Alagwa shook off his hand. "I will not stay alone in the white man's camp," she protested. "They are all liars and robbers and murderers. I hate them, hate them, hate them."

"Poor little chap!" Jack reached out his arms and drew the girl toward him. For a moment she hung back, then her head dropped upon his breast and she began to sob softly.

Jack let her cry on. Always he had despised boys who cried, and Alagwa was bigger than any boy he had ever seen with tears in his eyes. Yet, somehow, he felt only pity for her.

"Poor little chap," he murmured again. "You've had an awful day of it, haven't you? You ought to be asleep this very moment instead of sitting up here talking to a chump like me. Come! let me help

you into the wagon." He rose, drawing the girl to her feet beside him. "Come," he repeated.

But Alagwa held back. "You—you will not leave me at Fort Wayne?" she begged. "You will take me with you. I—I can help you find the girl."

Jack started. "By Jove! So you can!" he exclaimed. "All right. We'll leave it so. If we don't find your friends you shall stay with me. Now you must go to bed and to sleep."

CHAPTER IX

ALAGWA went to rest willingly enough, but for a long time she did not sleep. She was thinking of what Jack had said about the ammunition that he was taking to Fort Wayne and of its importance to the garrison there. If she could destroy it or give it over to the Indians she would have done much to carry out her pledge to Tecumseh. Carefully, she felt the boxes on which she lay, only to find their tops nailed hard and fast, far beyond the power of her slender fingers to loosen.

Could she get word to the runner? She was sure he was near. Perhaps there were others with him. Perhaps they could capture or destroy the wagon. It would cost Jack his life; she knew that and was sorry for it, but the fact did not make her pause. Against his life stood the lives of dozens of her people, who would be slain by this ammunition. No! The white men had dug up the tomahawk; and Jack and they must take the consequences.

But how could she get word to the runner? The camp was guarded. Dimly, she could descry Jack's form against the limestone boulder on which she and he had sat and talked. Instinctively she knew that he would not sleep, and she knew, too, that the

runner was not likely to appear unless she summoned him. And she saw no way to summon him without betraying herself and wrecking her mission without gain. Vainly her tired brain fluttered. At last, wearied out, she lay quiescent, determined to watch and wait. Perhaps a chance might come.

For hours she forced herself to lie awake. But she had not counted on the weakness due to her loss of blood and on the insistent demand of her nature for sleep to replenish the drain. Fight against it as she might, sleep crept upon her, insistent, not to be denied. Heavier and heavier grew her eyelids, and though again and again she forced them back, in time nature would no longer be denied.

When she waked darkness was about her. For an instant she thought she was back in the Indian lodge at Wapakoneta. Then the patch of moonlit sky that showed at the foot of the wagon caught her eyes and told her the truth.

With an effort she sat up. The hours of sleep had strengthened her immensely. Young, pure-blooded, healthy, her system had already made up much of the blood she had lost. New life was coursing through her veins. Except for the soreness and stiffness in her leg she felt almost herself again.

From where she lay she could see moonbeams on the trees south of the river. If she had been familiar with white man's time she would have said that it

was about four o'clock. Cautiously she sat up and looked out over the tail of the wagon.

The camp was shrouded in darkness, but after a time she made out a blanketed form stretched beneath the great slanting tree. This was Williams, she knew. In the middle of the ground, close to where the campfire had burned, lay another form, almost invisible against the dark soil. To the north, toward the road, across the rock that had so lately served her both for chair and table, sprawled a third form, whose heavy breathing came distinctly to her ears. He was a mere blur in the darkness, but Alagwa knew that Jack had intended to take both the first and the last watches and to give the midwatch to Cato. She knew, therefore, that the sentinel must be Cato. And she knew that he was asleep.

Sharply she drew her breath. Now was her chance to give the call of the whip-poor-will. Almost she had framed her lips to sound it.

Then suddenly and silently a head rose at the tail of the wagon and two fierce eyes bored questioningly into hers. Even in the darkness she could make out the horribly painted features. No civilized woman would have met such a vision without screaming, but Alagwa had been well trained. A single heart-rending start she gave, then faced the warrior.

The latter did not delay. He said no word, but he raised his tomahawk and swept it around the

camp toward the sleeping men. A voiceless question glittered in his eyes.

For a single moment Alagwa's heart stopped short; then it raced furiously, beating with great throbs that shook her slender frame and that to her strained consciousness seemed to echo drum-like through the sleeping camp. Now was the chance for which she had longed. By a single blow she might avenge Wilwiloway, might win the wagon-load of ammunition for her people, and might weaken the ruthless enemy whom she so hated. Now! Now! Now! Her brain thrilled with the summons.

Abruptly the glow faded. She could not, could not, give the word to kill. Not for all the ammunition in the land, not for the lives of all the Shawnee braves that lived, not for victory that would endure forever, could she give the word that would bring about the deaths of sleeping men. Desperately she shook her head and raised her hand, imperatively pointing to the forest.

The runner hesitated. Again, with mute insistence, he renewed his deadly question, and again Alagwa said him nay. At last, with a shrug of his naked shoulders, he dropped his arm. An instant more and the night had swallowed him up.

Alagwa dropped back gasping. Now that the chance was gone she longed for its return. A blaze of hate shook her—hate for the white men and for herself. She was a traitor, a coward, a weakling,

she told herself fiercely. She had broken faith with Tecumseh. She had failed in her duty to her people. The white blood she had inherited had betrayed her. Oh! If she could drain it from her veins and be red, all red. Despairingly she covered her face with her hands and her shoulders shook. An hour slipped by and still dry sobs racked her slender body.

Suddenly, a sound from near the great leaning tree reached her ears and she straightened up, staring into the faint light of the coming dawn. The sleeper beneath it had shifted his position. As she watched he sat up, cocking his head, evidently listening to the heavy breathing of the negro. Then he began to crawl noiselessly toward the wagon.

Alagwa drew her breath sharply. She knew the man was Williams and she knew why he was coming. She knew that the heavy rifle that Jack had taken from him was in the wagon and that he was trying to regain it. When he did regain it, what would he do? Would he not turn upon the young chief, who was taking him to be punished for the murder of Wilwiloway, and who had saved and befriended her. She could not doubt it.

She must stop him. But how? Fiercely but silently she laughed to herself. With his own rifle she would check him. It was in the wagon, close beside her! Powder-horn and bullet-pouch hung beside it. Jack had left them in her care

without a thought. Noiselessly she felt for the rifle and noiselessly she drew it toward her. It was loaded, she knew. From the powder-horn that hung beside it she primed it and thrust it across the tail of the wagon toward the creeping man.

As the sights fell in line upon him hate blazed up within her. He was at her mercy now—he, the murderer of Wilwiloway. The gods had given him into her hand. To slay him was her right and her duty. Should she do it? Her finger curled about the trigger. A little stronger pressure and Wilwiloway would be avenged.

Her Indian gods, the gods of vengeance, the gods that called for the payment of the blood debt, thundered in her ears. "Kill! Kill!" they clamored. "Kill! Faithless daughter of the Shawnees! Kill!" Of the Christian God she knew nothing; missionaries had not yet brought him to Wapakoneta, though the time when they would do so was close at hand. Steadily her finger tightened about the trigger.

Then it relaxed. What would Jack say—Jack with the broad forehead and the clear blue eyes? Would he approve? She knew that he would not. Instinctively she knew it. Too well her imagination mirrored forth the condemnation in his eyes. She did not understand the white man's ideas of law and justice. She had suffered too bitterly from their working; but she knew—knew—that Jack

understood them and that he would not countenance her taking vengeance into her own hands.

Slowly her finger relaxed its pressure. She leaned forward and gently clicked her tongue against the roof of her mouth.

The crouching man heard it and stopped short. She clicked again, and he looked up and saw the girl's face, white in the dawn, staring at him over the round black eye of the rifle. With a muffled cry he sprang to his feet, throwing out his hands as if to ward off the imminent death.

The shot did not come, and he began to shrink back. Step by step he moved and silently the rifle followed him. Once he paused and held out his hands as if offering a bargain. But the rifle held inexorably and after a time he resumed his halting retreat.

At last he reached his blankets. Above them he paused and shook his fist at her furiously.

Dark as it still was, Alagwa could not mistake his gestures nor doubt their meaning. He was swearing vengeance against her. Once more her finger curled about the trigger. She remembered the Shawnee proverb about the man who let a rattlesnake live. Was she letting a rattlesnake live?

As she hesitated, Cato grunted, groaned, and moved, and the man dropped swiftly down. Alagwa sighed; her chance was gone, perhaps forever.

Cato sat up, clutching at the rifle that had slipped

from his grasp. Stiffly he rose to his feet. For a moment he hesitated, then he walked over to Jack and shook him gently.

"It's time to git up, Mars' Jack," he said.

Jack sat up. "Why! Cato! You scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "It's morning. You've let me sleep all night."

Cato scratched his head hesitatingly. Then an expression of conscious virtue dawned upon his face. "Yessah! Mars' Jack," he said. "You was sleepin' so nice I just couldn't bear to wake you."

"Humph! Well! Everything seems to be all right. It's turned out well, Cato, but you mustn't do it again. You haven't heard any suspicious noises or anything, have you?"

The negro shook his head. "No, sah," he declared. "Everything's been just as peaceful as if we was back on the Tallapoosa. You c'n trust Cato to keep watch; dat you can, sah."

CHAPTER X

THE forest was breaking. The arcades of spell-bound woods that for three days had hemmed the road were losing their continuity, giving place to glades choked with under-brush and dappled with sunbeams. The chill of the swamp land was vanishing and the landscape was momentarily sweetening with the fragrance of annis grass and of fern. Now and again golden-green branches showed against a blue, cloud-flecked sky.

Jack and Alagwa, the latter mounted on Cato's horse, were riding behind the wagon, chatting together and looking forward, not altogether eagerly, to the change in surroundings which they knew must be at hand.

The strain of the first night had for the moment exhausted the girl's capacity to hate. She had touched a high point and had sunk back. When she saw that Jack and Cato were awake, reaction had overcome her and she had sunk back on her couch in the wagon, mind and heart both blank. When, later, she had forced herself to crawl from the wagon to join the others in a hasty breakfast, she had done so listlessly and silently. Still later, though she had gathered strength and vigor with the mounting day, she had found herself incapable of thinking of

either the past or the future. Like any other wild creature that had been driven beyond its strength, she could do nothing but exist. When the thought of the future and of her mission rose in her mind she deliberately forced it back. She had refused to countenance an attack upon the wagon when it was at her mercy; never again would she connive at its destruction. She had taken early occasion to warn Cato that his dereliction from duty had not passed unobserved, and she had won his eternal gratitude, to say nothing of his vows never to sleep on watch again, by promising not to tell Jack. Apart from this, then, was nothing for her to do until she reached Fort Wayne. Until then she could live only for the moment.

For the moment also she had laid aside her distrust of Jack. His heart might be bad, but his words were pleasant, and she would enjoy them while she could.

Swiftly the hours sped by. Her wound was healing fast and gave her little trouble. After the first day she found herself able to ride a little, and on the last day she remained almost continuously in the saddle, Jack by her side, talking the hours away.

Infinite was her ignorance of the life which Jack and his people led far away to the south and great was her curiosity concerning it. She told herself that it was merely the strangeness of the life that roused her interest. For her it could have no

personal interest. That she could ever dwell with the enemies of her people was unthinkable. But—well, it was pleasant to hear of so many things that had been far beyond her ken. Jack, on the other hand, found unexpected delight in enlightening the virgin field of her mind. Again and again he laughed at her ignorance, but his laughter was not of the kind that hurts. Long before the third day had begun, Jack had decided that this Indian-bred boy was the most interesting he had ever known, and Alagwa had unconsciously decided that Jack was very different from the others of his race. "If all white men were like him," she thought, "there would be no enmity between his people and mine." The bond of sympathy between the two was growing very strong.

"We'll be at Fort Wayne soon, Bob, I guess," Jack was saying, as they neared the edge of the forest. "I reckon it's mean for me to wish it, but I do hope we won't find your friends there. I didn't know how much I needed a jolly little chum."

Alagwa caught her breath. Almost she had forgotten Fort Wayne. Grimly her forgotten mission rose before her. When she reached the fort—Hastily she shook her head. "The white chief will find no friends of mine," she declared, soberly. "I have no friends."

"Oh! You must have friends somewhere, you know, and I've got to try to find them. I must do my best

to let them know you're alive. You may have a father and mother, still grieving for you. But if I can't find them——”

“And if you can not find them?” The girl was talking desperately, saying anything to prevent herself from thinking of what awaited her.

“Then I reckon I'll have to take you back to Alabama with me when I go—though the Lord knows when that'll be. You'll love Alabama, though it's mighty different from this Ohio country. Alabama is Shawnee—no, it's Creek—for ‘here-we-rest!’ The Creeks called it that because it is so pleasant. You'll come with me, won't you, Bob?”

“I?” Alagwa drew herself up. For the moment she was once more the Shawnee maiden. “Am I a dog to live among those who hate me?”

“Hate you!” Jack stared. “Good Lord! What are you talking about? Why! Dad would go crazy over you. He's the best old dad that ever lived. Cato's already deserted me for you. He's your sworn slave. He thinks you're the spirit and image of the Telfair family. By the way, he told me yesterday that you sure did have the Telfair nose. You may not think that's a compliment, but Cato meant it for one. As for the neighbors——”

Jack stopped short. He had just remembered that for several days he had failed to grieve over Sally Habersham and that he had quite forgotten

that his life was blighted. An expression of gloom came over his features.

Alagwa noticed it, but she said nothing. She had been taught not to force her chatter on a warrior, and her experience with white men had been too brief to change the ingrained custom of years. Besides, she was startled by Cato's remark. Woman-like, she had already discovered the strong family likeness she bore to Jack; and it had pleased rather than troubled her. But Cato's perception of it made her anxious. If he noticed it, others might do so and might grow suspicious; her identity might be detected, and if it was, her mission would fail.

Before Jack could notice her abstraction the break in the forest came. The trees stopped short, leaning westward as if dragged toward the sunset by some mighty impulse, only to be held back by one yet mightier. To north and to south the line of the forest ran interminably away, till it blended with the long grasses that swelled to meet it.

In front stretched the prairie, mile after mile of billowing green, flower-studded, cobweb-sheeted, ablaze with the painted wings of butterflies. Over it the breeze blew softly, laden with whispers, heavy with the scent of sun-dried grass.

With a gasp both Jack and Alagwa reined in. Then with wild whoops of delight they shook their reins and drove their heels into their horses' sides

and darted forward, out from behind the wagon, over the fresh springy turf.

As they passed, Williams, seated by Cato on the box, leaned forward and hailed them. "We're near Fort Wayne," he called. "An' there's white men there—none of your d—d Indian lovers. We'll see what they've got to say about your high-handed ways. And"—venomously—"we'll see what they've got to say about that half-breed boy, too."

Jack did not answer. He scarcely heard. All his thoughts were on the mighty plain that stretched before him. To him, as to Alagwa, the prairie was a revelation. All her life the girl had lived amid forests; all her life her view had been circumscribed by the boles of massive trees. Never had she dreamed of the vast sweep of the grassy plains. Jack's experience was wider, but even he had never seen the prairies. Like two children they shouted from very rapture. Along the flat they raced, intoxicated with the whistle of the wind, the smell of the grass, and the thunderous drumming of their horses' hoofs. Mile after mile they galloped, fronting the sunset, fleeing before their own enormously lengthening shadows. When at last they dragged their steeds to a walk, Jack had quite forgotten his gloomy pose and was talking and laughing as excitedly as if he were still the schoolboy he had been so short a time before.

Then suddenly he reined in and rose in his stirrups. The road, curving to the north around a great grassy swell, had come out upon a level at the far edge of which rose a great quadrilateral, with frowning blockhouses at its alternate corners. Under its protecting walls smaller buildings showed where the pioneers of a dauntless race were laying deep the foundations of a mighty state.

Smilingly he turned to Alagwa. "There's our destination! We'll stay there to-night and to-morrow I'll start back. You'll be too tired to go, of course."

Startled, the girl looked up. But her face cleared as she saw that Jack was smiling and guessed that he was mocking her.

Rapidly the quadrilateral swelled out of the plain. A great gate, midway of its southern side, stood invitingly open and toward this the travellers directed their way. A sentry stared at them curiously as they passed in but did not challenge or stop them.

Just inside the gate Jack reined in, looking for a moment at the unfamiliar scene. On the parade ground that occupied the square interior of the fort a company of forty soldiers was drilling under command of a heavy man, rotund and stout. At the left, in the shade of the walls, stood a group of men and boys, some of them white but most of them Indian.

Some one called out and the members of the group

turned from watching the drill and stared at the newcomers. The captain of the company, too, was plainly curious, for he turned his men over to a sub-officer and crossed to join the rest. He bore himself with an air of authority that bespoke him the commander of the fort.

Jack rode up to him and reined in, sweeping off his hat with a boyish flourish. "Good evening, sir!" he cried. "Have I the honor of addressing Captain Rhea?"

The officer shook his head. His face was flushed and the veins on his forehead were swollen. Obviously he had been drinking heavily. "Captain Rhea is ill," he grunted. "I'm Lieutenant Hibbs, in command. Who are you?"

Jack hesitated. He had not expected to find a drunken man in charge of so important a post as Fort Wayne. Heavy drinking was not rare in those days; rum was on every man's table and "Brown Betty" was drunk almost as freely by both sexes and all ages as coffee is to-day. The code of the day, however, condemned men in responsible positions for drinking more than they could carry decently.

As Jack hesitated the officer grew angry. His flushed face grew redder. "Speak up!" he growled. "Who are you and what do you want?"

Jack could hesitate no longer. Lightly he leaped from his saddle, looping the bridle over his arm and

came forward. "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Hibbs," he said. "I am Mr. Telfair, of Alabama, up here on personal business. I turned aside at Girty's Town to escort a wagon-load of ammunition that General Hull had sent you——"

"Ammunition!" The officer's mainer changed. He drew his breath with a long sobbing gasp. "Ammunition. We need it bad enough. Thank God you've come. General Hull sent you with it?"

"Not exactly. He sent it by two wagoners, but one of them"—Jack dropped his voice—"murdered an Indian and I had to arrest him and take charge of the wagon. I——"

"Murdered an Indian! Arrest him! Good God!" Mr. Hibbs was staring at the wagon, which was just appearing through the gates. "Who's that?" he demanded. "Damnation! It's Williams! You don't mean you've arrested Williams!" He threw up his hand. "Hey! Williams!" he shouted. "Come here!"

Williams jumped from the box and came forward.

Jack did not wait. "I had to arrest him," he declared. "I'll be only too glad to explain all the circumstances if I can see you privately." He cast a glance around the listening throng. "It seems hardly wise to speak too freely here——" He stopped, for Mr. Hibbs had brushed by him and had gone forward to meet the wagoner.

"Hello! Williams!" he hiccoughed. "You back? Where's Wolf?"

The company that had been drilling had been dismissed and the men came running up. Plainly they were anxious to learn what news the newcomers might have brought. Most of them waved their hands to Williams as they drew near, though they did not venture to break in on his talk with their officer.

Williams paid little attention to them. He was choking with anger. "Wolf's dead," he rasped. "Killed by a dog of a Shawnee. I guess you'd better ask that young squirt about it." He jerked his head toward Jack. "He's running this expedition."

Mr. Hibbs's brow darkened. He glanced at Jack doubtfully. "Did General Hull put him in charge of the ammunition?" he asked.

"Ammunition? What ammunition?" Williams snarled scornfully.

"The ammunition you brought, of course."

"I ain't brought no ammunition. Those durned Injun agents are always fussing about honest traders, and I got by Colonel Johnson's deputy at Piqua by saying that I had ammunition. But I ain't got a bit. I ain't got nothing but whiskey and trade goods. This young know-it-all, he hears what I says to the agent, and he takes it on himself to escort the ammunition and I lets him do it."

A roar of laughter went up from the crowd. Aristocrats were not popular on the frontier and Jack was plainly an aristocrat. Besides, Williams was a friend and the crowd was very willing to follow his lead.

Jack flushed hotly as he realized how completely he had been humbugged. He tried to speak, but his voice was drowned by jeers.

Mr. Hibbs, however, neither laughed nor jeered. The failure to get ammunition seemed to strike him hard. Furiously he swung round on Jack.

But before he could speak Williams thrust in. "I got those things you wanted, lieutenant," he said. "But he's taken charge of 'em." He jerked his thumb toward Jack. "Maybe he'll give 'em to you if you go down on your knees and ask for 'em pretty."

Mr. Hibbs found his voice. "What the devil does this mean?" he demanded. "You, sir, I mean." He glared at Jack. "I'm talking to you. What have you got to do with this thing, anyway?"

Jack refused to be stampeded. He was horribly abashed by the fiasco of the ammunition, and he saw that no explanation that he could make was likely to be well received. "I'd rather wait and go into things privately, lieutenant," he demurred.

"Privately! H—l! You go ahead and be d—quick about it!"

Before Jack could speak a tall, thin man, who

had been watching the scene with growing disgust, stepped forward hurriedly. "I think the young man is right, Mr. Hibbs," he said. "It seems to me that it would be much better to talk in private." He turned to Jack. "I am Major Stickney, the Indian agent here, Mr. Telfair," he said.

Mr. Hibbs gave him no time to say more. Furiously he turned upon him. "It seems best to you, does it," he yelled. "Yes, I reckon it is just the sort of thing that would seem best to a greenhorn like you. But you might as well understand here and now, that I'm in command here and that you nor anybody else can tell me what to do." He turned to Jack. "Go on," he roared.

Further objection was evidently useless. Jack spoke out. "I charge this man," he said, pointing to Williams, "with the deliberate and uncalled-for murder of a friendly Shawnee chief, at the moment that he was making the peace sign. This man shot him down without any provocation and without any warning. After he had shot him the Indian sprang at him and at his companion, a man named Wolf, tore Wolf's gun from him, and brained him with it. Then he sprang at Williams, who struck him down with his hatchet and then scalped him."

"Good! Good! Bully for you, Williams." A roar of applause rose from the soldiers. Mr. Hibbs did not check it.

Jack hurried on. "You understand, sir," he

said, "what terrible consequences this might have led to at this particular time. Tecumseh has already led several hundred Shawnees north to join the British, and the murder of a friendly chief, if it had become known in its true aspect, might have roused the remainder of the tribe and turned ten thousand warriors against the white settlements. I did the only thing I could to prevent it. I placed this man under arrest and took him to Girty's Town, where I hoped to turn him over to Colonel Johnson. Colonel Johnson was not there, however, and so I gave out that the Indian had been killed by Wolf in a personal quarrel. I left a note for Colonel Johnson explaining the true circumstances of the case. Then, knowing your urgent need for ammunition and thinking this wagon was loaded with it, I came on here as quickly as I could, bringing this man as a prisoner to be dealt with as you might think fit."

Mr. Hibbs was rocking on his feet. Scarcely did he wait for Jack to finish. "Shot an Injun, did he?" he burst out. "Well, it's a d— good thing. I wish he'd shot a dozen of the scurvy brutes. And you're complaining of him, are you? How about yourself? What were you doing while the fight was going on?" He swung round on Williams. "What was he doing, Williams?" he asked.

The wagoner laughed scornfully. "He warn't doing nothing," he sneered. "He sat on his horse

and watched the Injun kill Wolf without raisin' a hand to stop him. But he was mighty forward in stopping me when I started to wipe out that half-breed boy yonder."

A snarl rose from the crowding men. But the reference to Alagwa served momentarily to divert their attention.

"That boy was with the Injun," went on Williams; "and he come at Wolf with a knife. Wolf shot him through the leg and he fell, and after I'd done for the Injun I started after the cub. But this here sprig run me down with his horse an' took my gun away before I could get up."

Again the crowd snarled. "Duck him! Flog him! Hang him!" it cried. The calls were low and tentative, but they were gaining volume.

Mr. Hibbs made no effort to check them or to keep his men in hand. Rather he urged them on. "Well! sir!" he demanded, truculently. "What have you got to say?"

Jack's lips whitened. He was little more than a lad, and the incredible attitude of this officer of the United States army, from whom he had the right to expect support, confounded him. He had yet to learn, as the country had yet to learn, that the United States army was then officered by many men who had gotten their positions by political influence and were totally unfitted for their work—men who

were to bring disgrace and dishonor on the American flag.

Doggedly, Jack tried to protest. "The boy is white, lieutenant," he interrupted. "You've only to look at him to see that. For the rest, this man is perverting the facts. He committed a wanton murder, and if it makes the Indians rise——"

"Let 'em rise and be d—d! Who cares whether they rise or not?" Mr. Hibbs hesitated a moment and then went on. "We've just got news from General Hull. He's crossed into Canada and scattered the redcoats and the red devils. We'll have all Canada in a month. And if any of the Injuns anywhere try to make trouble we'll shoot 'em. And if any white-livered curs from the east try to make trouble we'll shoot them, too. Wolf was a d—sight better man than you'll ever be."

Jack threw his head back and his jaw stiffened. The insults that had been heaped upon him made his blood boil. But he remembered that Mr. Hibbs was an officer in the army of his country and, as such, entitled to respect.

"Sir!" he said, almost gently. "I will not enter into comparisons or arguments. I have done what I thought was my duty. I am an American citizen and it is surely my duty, as it is yours, sir, to try to prevent friends from turning into foes——"

"My duty!" Mr. Hibbs broke in with a roar. "You'll teach me my duty, will you? By God!"

We'll see." He swung round. "Officer of the guard!" he trumpeted.

"Sir!" An officer stepped forward.

"Call two men and take this young cub to the calaboose and flog him well. We'll teach him to meddle in matters that don't concern him."

Flogging was common in those days. Privates in the army were flogged for all sorts of misdeeds.

The crowd surged forward. Beyond question its sympathies were with Hibbs and against Jack. The note of savagery in its snarl would have frightened most men.

It did not frighten Jack. His blue eyes gleamed with an anger that did not blaze—a frosty anger that froze those on whom it fell.

"Just a moment," he cried. "The first man that lays hand on me dies."

The crowd hesitated, clutching at pistols and knives. The moment was freighted with death.

Then, abruptly, some one pushed a rifle—Williams's rifle—into Jack's hands and he heard Alagwa's voice in his ear. "White chief kill!" she gritted. "Sing death song. I die with him."

On the other side Cato pressed forward. "I'se here, Mars' Jack," he quavered. "Cato's here."

CHAPTER XI

FOR a moment the crowd hung in the balance. Then Jack laughed. The ridiculous side of the quarrel had struck him. He turned to Alagwa. "Thank you, Bob, old chap," he said, gratefully. "And you, too, Cato. I won't forget. But I reckon we won't have to kill anybody."

Still holding the rifle, he turned back to the throng. "Here's your rifle, Williams," he said, tossing the gun indifferently over. "Come, old man," he called to Alagwa. "Come, Cato!" Without a backward glance he strode away.

Silence almost complete followed his departure. Mr. Hibbs made no move to renew his order; he stood still and watched the party walk away. Plainly he was beginning to realize that he had gone too far.

Stickney, however, with an impatient exclamation, separated himself from the others and hurried after Jack. "You did exactly right, Mr. Telfair," he said, as he came up, "and I'm sorry you should have been so outrageously treated. Captain Rhea isn't a bad sort, but he is very ill and Mr. Hibbs is in his place and you see what sort of a man he is. The fiasco about the ammunition made it worse. We are practically out of it."

Jack nodded and laughed a little shamefacedly. "I reckon it serves me right," he said. "I got the idea that I was serving the country and I reckon I made a fool of myself. The worst of it is, I left some very important matters of my own. However, there's no use crying over spilled milk. Since General Hull has been so successful——"

"But has he?" Mr. Stickney broke in. "I hope he has. He really has crossed into Canada. We know that much. But we don't know any more. Hibbs invented the rest in order to counteract the effect of his slip in saying that we are short of ammunition. You see, there is some little excuse for his behavior, outrageous as it was."

Jack nodded. "I see!" he acceded. "Well! It really doesn't matter. I intended to start back to Piqua tomorrow morning, anyway."

"Oh! We can't let you go that quickly. I want to hear more about that murder. I must send a report about it to Washington. You'll give me the details?"

"With pleasure."

Major Stickney hesitated and glanced round. "The factory building is outside the fort," he said, "and I'd be delighted to have you stay there with me, if it wasn't crowded to the doors. My assistant, Captain Wells, with his wife and their children completely fill it. But there's a sort of hotel here kept by a French trader, one Peter Bondie, and he can

put you up for the night. That will give us time for a talk."

Jack nodded. "Good!" he exclaimed. "I'll be only too glad to stay, especially as I want to consult you about this youngster." He turned toward Alagwa. "Come here, Bob," he called. "I want you to meet Major Stickney."

Alagwa was lagging behind the rest. Her brain was tingling with the information that had just come to her ears. The fort—the great bulwark of all northwest Indiana and Ohio—was almost out of ammunition. A small force of her Shawnees, aided by a few redcoats, if well armed, might take it easily. If she could only send them information! Ah! that would be a triumph greater far than the capture of many wagons—even of wagons actually laden with ammunition.

She would seek the runner at once. She would not hesitate again as she had hesitated on that unforgettable night. The men in the fort were the sort of Americans she hated. More, they had dared to threaten the young white chief. She had meant what she said when she offered to fight them to the death. Gladly she would kill them all, all!

Jack threw his arm about her shoulders and drew her to his side. "This is the boy that Wolf shot," he explained. "I call him Bob, because he doesn't know his white name, and I want him to forget he

was ever an Indian. He and I have got to be great chums already."

Stickney smiled. "So it seems," he commented, eyeing Alagwa with approval. "He certainly seems to be pretty clear grit. He stood behind you just now like a man, even if he isn't knee high to a grasshopper."

Jack glanced at Alagwa affectionately. "He's a good one, all right," he declared. "Cato swears he's quality and Cato's a mighty good judge. I can see it myself, for that matter. He must come from good people and we've got to find them. And he's pure grit. Williams told the truth about his part in the fight. That's another thing I'll tell you about tonight. Where did you say this Peter Bondie was to be found?" Jack looked about him inquiringly.

The sun was dropping lower and lower. Its rays traced fiery furrows across the bending grass of the prairie and filled the air with golden lights. Against it the crest of the fortress stood black, golden rimmed at the top. Afar, the broad river gleamed silver bright beneath the darkening sky.

Stickney pointed ahead. "Yonder's his store and hotel, ahead there by the river. His wife is a Miami Indian, but she attends to the store and you probably won't see her at all. His sister, Madame Fantine Loire, a widow, manages the hotel. She's a born cook and she'll give you meals that you'll remember after you are dead. I'm afraid she can't

give you a room. Her guests just spread their blanket rolls before the fire in the bar room and sleep there. They seem to find it very comfortable."

Jack nodded. "That'll be all right," he answered, absently. He was peering westward, beneath his shading hand. "I think I see somebody I know—Yes! By George! I do! It's Tom Rogers. I reckon he's looking for me."

Rogers it was! He was approaching at a dog-trot from the direction of the fort. When he saw that Jack had seen him he slackened his pace.

"Talk! Talk! Talk!" he began, when he came up. "These people here sure do knock the persimmons for talk. Back in the fort they're buzzing like a hive of bees. They talk so much I couldn't hardly find out what had happened. And what's the use of it? There ain't none. Go ahead and *do* things is my motto. When you get to talkin' there's no tellin' where you'll come out. Anybody might ha' knowed it was plumb foolish to try to talk to that man Hibbs. Everybody in this country knows him. You can't do nothing with him unless you smash him over the head. But I reckon you found that out. They tell me you pulled a pistol on him. That's the right thing to do. Powder talks and——"

Jack broke in. He had learned by experience that to break in was the only way to get to speak at all when Rogers held the floor. "Did you bring me

a letter from Colonel Johnson?" he asked. "Has he found the girl?"

"Not yet. She's plumb vanished. But I brought you a letter from the Colonel." The old man felt in his hunting shirt and drew out a packet, which he handed to Jack. "Colonel Johnson says to me, says he——"

Again Jack interrupted. "We're going to Peter Bondie's to spend the night," he said. "Come along with us."

The old hunter's face lit up. "Say!" he exclaimed. "You ain't never been here before, have you? Well, you got a treat comin'! Just wait till you see Madame Fantine and eat some of her cooking. An' she's a mighty fine woman besides. Jest tell her I'll be along later. First I reckon I'd better go back to the fort. I've got some friends there and maybe I can smooth things down for you some. There ain't no use in makin' enemies. The boys are pretty sore at you just now. But I c'n smooth 'em down all right if I can only get a chance to put a word in edgeways. The trouble is that people talk so blame much——"

"All right. Come to the inn when you get ready. You'll find us there."

Jack turned back to Stickney. As he did so he tore open his letter and glanced over its contents. It was from Colonel Johnson, acknowledging the receipt of his letter, commanding his action in the

matter of Wilwiloway's murder, and promising to do all he could to find the girl of whom Jack was in search. "I know her well," ended the colonel, "and I shall be glad to look for her. She was here recently, but she has disappeared and I rather think she may have gone north with Tecumseh. Your best chance of finding her would probably be to go down the Maumee and join General Hull at Detroit. As for Captain Brito Telfair, he has disappeared and has probably gone back to Canada."

Jack handed the letter to Major Stickney. "This touches on the main object of my visit to Ohio, Major," he said, when the latter had read it. "The girl of whom Colonel Johnson speaks is the daughter of my kinsman, Delaroche Telfair, who came to Ohio from France in 1790 and settled at Gallipolis. Later, he seems to have lived with the Shawnees, probably as a trader, and when he died he left his daughter in Tecumseh's care." Jack went on, explaining the circumstances that made it necessary for him to find the girl without delay. "If you can help me any, Major," he finished, "I'll be grateful."

"I'll be delighted. But I'm afraid I can't do much. I'm a greenhorn up here, you know. But I'll ask Captain Wells, my assistant. He's been in these parts all his life. He was captured by the Miamis forty years ago and grew up with them and married a Miami woman. He'll know if anyone

does—No! By George!”—Major Stickney was growing excited—“I forgot. Peter Bondie will know more than Wells. He and his sister were in the party of Frenchmen that settled Gallipolis in 1790. They were recruited in Paris and very likely they came over in the ship with your relation. Of course neither of them is likely to know anything about the girl, but it’s just possible that they may. Anyway, you’ll want to talk to them. Here’s their place.”

Major Stickney pointed to a log building, larger than most of its neighbors, that stood not far from the bank of the river. From the crowd of Indians and the piles of miscellaneous goods at one of its entrances it seemed to be as much store as dwelling.

Jack stepped forward eagerly. “Talk to them?” he echoed. “I should think I would! This is great luck.” Jack knew that many of the French settlers of Gallipolis had quit their first homes on the banks of the Ohio river and had scattered through the northwest, but he had not expected to find two of them at Fort Wayne. Perhaps his coming there would prove to be less of a blunder than he had thought a few moments before. So eager was he to see them that for the moment he forgot Alagwa.

The girl was glad to be forgotten. Her heart was throbbing painfully. For a moment the necessity of sending word to Tecumseh about the ammunition

had been thrust into the background. To most persons the thought of finding of people who had known their father would have caused little emotion. To Alagwa, however, it came as a shock, the more so from its unexpectedness. Her memories of her father were very few, but she had secretly cherished them, grieving over their incompleteness. Fear of betraying her identity had prevented her from questioning Jack too closely about him; and, indeed, Jack was almost as ignorant as she concerning the things she wished to know. But here were a man and a woman, who had crossed the ocean with him when he was young and vigorous. Surely they knew him well! Perhaps they had known her mother, whom she remembered not at all. Her heart stood still at the thought. Dully she heard Cato's voice expounding the family relationships to Rogers, who seemed to be for the moment dumb. "Yes, sah!" he was saying. "Dat's what I'm tellin' you. Dere ain't nobody better'n de Telfairs in all Alabama. Dey sure is—Lord A'mighty! Who dat?"

Alagwa looked up and saw a little round Frenchman, almost as swarthy as an Indian, running down the path toward them, literally smiling all over himself. Behind him waddled an enormously fat woman, who shook like a bowlful of jelly.

A moment more and the man had come up. "Ah! Is it my good friend, Major Stickney?" he burst out. "He brings me the guests, yes!"

Stickney nodded, smilingly. "Four of them, Peter," he said; "and one more to come—a very special one. I commend him especially to your sister. A man named—er—Rogers, I believe." He grinned at the woman, who was hurrying up.

She grinned back at him. "Oh! La! La!" she cried. "That silent Mr. Rogers. He will not talk. He will do nothing but eat. Mon Dieu! What is one to do with such a man? But les autres! These other messieurs here. They are most welcome."

Stickney nodded. "They start for Detroit to-morrow," he explained, "but before they go they want to eat some of your so-wonderful meals. They've heard about them from Rogers. Ah! But that man adores you, Madame Fantine. Besides, they've got a lot to ask you."

"To ask me, monsieur?" The French woman's beady eyes darted inquiringly from Stickney to Jack and back again.

"Yes! You and our good friend Pierre."

"Bon! I shall answer with a gladness, but, yes, with a gladness. It is of the most welcome that they are. They are of the nobility. With half an eye one can see that. It will be a pleasure the most great to entertain them."

As she spoke the French woman's roving eyes rested on Alagwa's face. Instantly they widened with an amazement that sent the blood flooding to

the tips of the girl's shell-like ears. Then they jumped to Jack's face and she gasped.

"Of a truth, monsieur," she went on, after an almost imperceptible break. "It is not worth the while to prepare the dishes of *la belle France* for the *cochons* who live hereabouts. They care for naught but enough to fill their bellies! But you, monsieur, ah! it will be the great pleasure to cook for you. *Entrez! Entrez! Messieurs.*" She stood aside and waved her guests toward the house.

CHAPTER XII

THE "Maison Bondie" consisted of two square buildings of the blockhouse type, set thirty or forty feet apart and connected by a single roof that turned the intervening space into a commodious shed, beneath which was a well and a rack with half a dozen basins that plainly comprised the toilet arrangements of the hotel. Both buildings were built of logs, roughly squared and strongly notched together at the corners. The doorways, which opened on the covered space, were small, and the doors themselves were massive. The windows were few and were provided with stout inside shutters that could be swung into place and fastened at a moment's notice. Loopholes were so placed as to command all sides of the building. The place looked as if built to withstand an attack, and, in fact, had withstood more than one in its ten-years' history.

Back of the buildings were half a dozen wagons, each fronted by a pair of horses or mules, which were contentedly munching corn from the heavy troughs that had been removed from the rear and placed athwart the tongue of the wagon.

Yielding to Madame Fantine's insistence the newcomers turned toward the entrance to the hotel.

But before he had taken a dozen steps Major Stickney halted. "Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I've got to go in a minute. I'll be back tonight, Mr. Telfair—but I want to know something before I go. Tell me, Peter, and you too, Madame Fantine, did you not come from France to Gallipolis in 1790?"

The Bondies stopped short. Madame Fantine's startled eyes sprang to Alagwa's face, then dropped away. "But yes, Monsieur," she cried. "But yes! Ah! It was dreadful. The company have defrauded us. They have promised us the rich lands and the pleasant climate and the fine country and the game most abundant. And when we come we find it is all covered with the great forests. There is no land to grow the crops until we cut away the trees. Figure to yourself, messieurs, was it not the wicked thing to bring from Paris to such a spot men who know not to cut trees?"

Stickney nodded. "It was pretty bad," he admitted. "There's no doubt about that, though the company wasn't altogether to blame, I believe. But what I wanted to ask was whether a gentleman, M. Delaroche Telfair, was on your ship."

"M. Delaroche! You know M. Delaroche?" Madame Fantine's eyes grew big and the color faded from her cheeks. "But yes, monsieur, he was on the ship. And he was with us before. We knew him well. Is it not so, Pierre?"

Peter Bondie nodded. "All the life we have

known M. Delaroche," he said. "We were born on the estate of his father, the old count. Later we have come with him to America. Ah! But he was the great man! When he married Mademoiselle Delawar at Marietta, Fantine go to her as maid. Later she nurse la bebée. And then Madame Telfair die, and M. Delaroche is all, what you call, broke up. He take la bebée and he go away into the woods and I see him never again. But I hear that he is dead and that la bebée grows up with the Indians."

"She did!" Major Stickney struck in. "She was with them till the other day. Now she has disappeared. I thought, perhaps, you might know something of her. Mr. Telfair here has come to Ohio to find her."

The French woman's beady eyes jumped to Jack's face. "This monsieur!" she gasped. "Is he of the family Telfair?"

"Yes, of the American branch. His people have lived in Alabama for a hundred years!"

"And he seeks the Lady Estelle?" Wonder spoke in the woman's tones.

Stickney nodded impatiently. "Yes! Of course," he reiterated. "The old Count Telfair is dead and his estates all belong to the daughter of M. Delaroche. The title descends to the English branch, to Mr. Brito Telfair——"

"M. Brito!" Fantine and Pierre looked at each

other. "Ah! that is what bring him to Canada," they cried, together.

"You knew that he was in Canada?" It was Jack who asked the question.

Fantine answered. "But, yes, monsieur," she said. "We have friends at Malden that send us word. I know not then why he come, but now it is very clear. He want to marry the Lady Estelle and get her property to pay his debts. Ah! Le scelerat!"

"You seem to know him?" Jack was curious.

"Non, monsieur. I know him not. But I know of him. And I know his house. M. Delaroche has hated it always."

"He warned Tecumseh against him before he died, and when Brito turned up and asked for Miss Estelle, as he did two or three months ago, Tecumseh put him off and sent a messenger to me asking me to come and take charge of her. I am a member of the Panther clan of the Shawnees, you know; Tecumseh's mother raised me up a member when I was a boy, ten years ago. Perhaps it was because of Delaroche that she did so. I came on at once but when I got to Girty's Town I found that the girl had disappeared."

"And you can not find her?" Fantine's bright eyes were darting from Jack's face to Alagwa's and back again. "You have search—and you can not find her?"

"Well! I haven't searched very much!" Jack laughed ruefully. "I haven't been able." He went on and told of his adventures with Williams.

Fantine listened in seeming amazement, with many exclamations and shrugs of her mighty shoulders. When Jack tried to slur over his picking up of the boy, as being, to his mind, not pertinent to the subject, she broke in and insisted on hearing the tale in full.

Alagwa listened with swimming brain. She was sure, sure, that this fiendishly clever French woman had penetrated her sex at a glance and that she had almost as swiftly guessed her identity with the missing girl. Exposure stared her in the face. Her plans rocked and crashed about her.

In the last three days Alagwa had come to think her disguise perfect and had built on it in many ways. By it she had hoped to carry out her pledge to Tecumseh. With her detection her mission must fail or, at least, be sharply circumscribed. She had known Jack for three days only, but she was very sure that, once he knew who she was, he would insist on taking her south with him to Alabama. She could not serve Tecumseh in Alabama. Moreover—her heart fluttered at the thought—Jack would no longer treat her with the same frank, free comradeship that had grown so dear to her. She did not know how he would treat her, but she was sure it

would be different. And she did not want it to be different.

Desperately she sought for some way to ward off the threatened disclosure. The Frenchwoman seemed in no haste to speak; perhaps she might be induced to be silent. Alagwa remembered the roll of gold coins that Tecumseh had given her. Perhaps—

Suddenly she remembered that this woman had been her nurse when she was small. For the moment she had failed to realize this fact or to guess what it might mean. Now, that she did so, hope sprang up in her heart. If Fantine kept silence till she could speak to her alone she would throw herself on her mercy, tell her all that she had not already guessed, and beg for silence. Surely her old nurse might grant her that much. She did not know, she could not know, that her wishes would be law to one like Fantine, born on the estates of the great house from which she was descended.

Jack's tale drew to a close. "That's all, I reckon," he ended. "Can you suggest anything, madame?"

Fantine's lips twitched. Again she looked at Alagwa and then met Jack's eyes squarely. "Non, Monsieur! I can suggest nothing, me!" she assented, deliberately. "But, monsieur, I make you very welcome to the house of Bondie. Is this"—she jerked her head toward Alagwa—"is this the boy you have rescue?" Her eyes bored into his.

Jack grinned. He was beginning to like the big French woman immensely. "I wouldn't call it rescue, exactly," he said. "But this is the boy."

"Ah! la, la," the French woman burst out. "Le pauvre garcon! But he is tired, yes, one can see that, and I am the big fool that I keep him and you standing. Ah, la, la, but we all are of blindness. Ah! yes but of a blindness. Entrez, entrez, messieurs! Peter will show the black monsieur where to put the horses. Entrez!"

Jack turned obediently toward the entrance, but Stickney halted. Plainly he was disappointed at Fantine's lack of information. "Well! I'm off," he declared. "I'll be back later to go over things with you, Mr. Telfair."

He strode away, and Jack and Alagwa followed Madame Fantine beneath the shed. Cato and Peter led the horses away.

The smaller of the two buildings evidently served as a store. No white men were visible about its entrance, but through the open door the newcomers could see an Indian woman behind the counter and a dozen blanketed Indians patiently waiting their turn to trade. At the door of the larger building, several white men were sitting, and inside, in the great bar room, Jack could see a dozen more eating at a table made of roughly-hewn planks set on home-made trestles.

Close to the door Madame Fantine paused. "You

will want to wash, yes?" she questioned, waving her hands toward the basins.

Jack nodded. "Glad to!" he declared.

"It is all yours, monsieur. It is not what you are accustomed to, but on the frontier—What would you, monsieur? For the table—ah! but, messieurs, there you shall live well. I go to prepare for you the dishes of *la belle France*."

She turned away, then stopped. "Ah! But I forget!" she exclaimed. "Le pauvre garcon has the fatigue, yes," she turned to Alagwa. "Come with me, jeune monsieur," she said; "and you shall rest. Oh! but it is that you remind me of my own son, he who has gone to the blessed angels. Come!" Without waiting for comment the big French woman threw her arm around Alagwa's shoulders and hurried her into the house, past the eating men, who regarded her not at all, and on into another room.

There she turned on the girl, holding out her arms. "Ah! Ma petite fille!" she cried. "Think you Fantine did not know you when you looked at her out of the face of that dear, dead Monsieur Delaroche. Have I hold you in my arms when you were the one small bebée to forget you now. Ah! non! non! non! Ah! But the men are of a blindness. The wise young man he search, search, and not know he have found already."

Alagwa's heart melted. Suddenly she realized the strain under which she had been for the last

four days. With a sob of relief she slipped into the French woman's arms and wept her heart out on the latter's motherly bosom.

The latter soothed her gently. "There! There! Pauvre bebée," she murmured. "Fear not! All will be right. But what has happened that you are thus?" She glanced at the girl's masculine attire. "Ah! But it must be the great tale. Tell Fantine about it. Tell your old nurse, who adores you!"

Between sobs Alagwa obeyed, pouring out the tale of all that had befallen her since the day when Captain Brito had sought her out. She held back only the real object with which she had come into the American lines. "Tecumseh sent me to find the young white chief from the far south," she ended.

"But, ma cherie," the French woman interrupted. "Have you not found him? Why do you not tell him who you are?"

The girl shook her head in panic. "Oh! No! No!" she cried. "He must not know."

"But why not?"

"Because—because"—Alagwa cast about desperately for an excuse. "He would be ashamed of me," she said. "I am so different from the women he has known."

Fantine's eyes twinkled. Emphatically she nodded. "Different? Yes, truly, you are different," she cried, scanning the dark, oval face, the scarlet

lips, the rich hair that tangled about the broad brow. "Ah! But yes, of a truth you are different! In a few months you will be very different. But, monsieur the wise young man will not complain."

Alagwa's eyes widened. "You—you think I will be pretty like—like the white women he has known?" she asked, shyly.

"Pretty! Mother of God! She asks whether she will be pretty? Ah! Rascal that you are; to jest with your old nurse so. But—but it is not proper that you should be clothed thus—" again Fantine glanced rebukingly at the girl's nether limbs—"or that you should travel alone with a young man. That becomes not a demoiselle of France."

The terror in the girl's eyes came back. "But I must," she cried. "Please—please—"

"But why?"

A deep red stained the girl's cheeks. "Oh," she cried. "I must know why he seeks me. The Captain Brito want to marry me for what has come to me. This one—this one—Is he, too, base? Does he, too, seek me because I have great possessions? If he finds out who I am I shall never learn. If he does not find out—"

The French woman chuckled. "And the wise young man does not guess that you are a woman!" she cried, holding up her hands. "Ah! Quelle bêtise. Eh! bien, I see well it is too late to talk of

chaperones now. Have no fear, ma petite! I will not tell him. He seems a good young man—as men go. I read it in his eyes. But truly he is a great fool."

But at this the girl grew suddenly angry. "He is no fool," she cried. "He is——"

"All men are fools," quoth the French woman, sagely. "You will find it so in time. Go your way, cherie! Fantine Loire will not betray you. And, remember, her house is ever open to you. Come back to her when you will. Tonight you will sleep here, in this room of my own son, now with the blessed saints. And now—Mother of God! I must fly or M. Jack will be mad with the hunger. And, cherie, remember this! Men are not well to deal with when they are hungry. Feed them, ma cherie! Feed them!" She rushed away, leaving Alagwa alone.

How the girl got through dinner she never knew. After it, when Major Stickney returned, bringing Captain Wells, a tall, grave man, she pleaded fatigue and left him and Jack to talk with each other and with the men in the hotel, while she slipped away to the room that Madame Fantine had prepared for her. Till late that night she and the kindly French woman sat up and talked.

Even when left alone the girl did not sleep. Her duty to Tecumseh lay heavy on her soul. She must send him the information in her possession or she

must confess herself a coward and a traitor to her people.

Yet she shrank from it. Not for the sake of the men in the fort! She hated them all, she told herself. Gladly would she slay them all. And not for the sake of the Bondies. She had learned enough that night to feel sure that they would be safe from any Indian attack. No! Her hesitation came from another cause.

What would Jack say when he knew that she was a spy? Insistently the question drummed into her ears. What would he say? What would he do? She pressed her fingers to her hot eyeballs, but the pressure did not dim the vision of his eyes, stricken blank with anger and with shame.

And yet she must send Tecumseh word. She must! She had promised to keep the faith, to do her duty regardless of consequences to herself. She had visioned death as her punishment and had been ready to face it. She had not visioned the torture of Jack's hurt eyes. For a moment they seemed to her harder to face than the stake and the flame. But should she stop for this—stop because the penalty was heavier than she had thought? Never.

One crumb of comfort came to her. One thing at least she could do; one small recompense she could exact. She could demand Jack's safety. She could send a message to Tecumseh that would make the lad's comings and goings safe. She knew he

would hate her for it. But he would hate her anyway. She would not stop for that. She would make him safe. And when it was all over and he knew, she would die as an Indian maid should die.

Noiselessly—as noiselessly as she had moved through the forests—Alagwa rose from her bed and slipped to the door. Inch by inch she opened it and looked out. The house was black and silent; its inmates slept. Slowly she crept to the entrance to the big bar room. The night was hot and the windows and the door stood wide open, letting in a faint glimmer from moon and stars. In its light the sleeping forms of men on the floor loomed black. Side by side they lay, so close together that Alagwa could see no clear passageway between them. Suppose they waked as she tried to pass!

It did not occur to her that her going out would surprise no one—that no one would dream of questioning her. Her conscience made a coward of her and made her think that to be seen was to be suspected. Desperately she caught her breath and looked about her, seeking Jack's form, but failing to find it. He was indistinguishable among the blanket-wrapped forms.

Long she stood at the door, peering into the room, her heart hammering in unsteady rhythm. At last she stepped forward gingerly, threading her way, inch by inch, catching her breath as some sleeper stirred uneasily, expecting every moment

to hear the ringing out of a fierce challenge. Foot by foot she pressed onward till the door was at her hand. Through it she stepped out beneath the midnight sky.

The night was very still. High overhead the slim crescent of the moon peered through swift-flying clouds. Round about, the great stars, scarcely dimmed, flared like far-off candles. The broad shallow river ran away to the east, a silver whiplash laid across the darkened prairie. Beyond, the huddle of huts that marked the Indian village stood out against the horizon. To the left, nearer at hand, rose the black quadrilateral of the fort.

All around rose the voices of the night. A screech owl hooted from a near-by tree. A fox barked in the long grass. Nearer at hand restless horses and mules stamped at their fastenings. Over all rose the bellow of bullfrogs, the lapping of the river against its banks, and the ceaseless, strident calls of the crickets.

Once more Alagwa's hot eyes sought the fort. Within it were the men of the race she hated—the men who had derided and had threatened the young white chief. There, too, the murderer of Wilwiloway slept safe and snug, pardoned—yes, even commended—for his crime. And should she withhold her hand? Never! She would take revenge upon them all.

Swiftly she slipped through the grass to the

shadow of a near-by tree. Then, raising her head, she gave the soft cry of the whip-poor-will.

Long she waited, but no answer came. Again she called and yet again, till at last an answering call came softly to her ears. A moment more and the form of the runner shaped itself out of the night.

Eagerly she leaned forward. "Bear word to the great chief," she said, in the Shawnee tongue, "that the fort here is almost without ammunition. Let the great chief come quickly and it will fall into his hands like a ripe persimmon. But let him have a care for the lives of the agent, Major Stickney, and for those of Peter Bondie and his family. They are the friends of Alagwa."

The runner nodded. "Alagwa need not fear," he promised. "They are also the friends of the Indian. Is there more to be said?"

"Yes!" Alagwa nodded. "Tell the great chief that I have found the young white chief from the south, and that through him I hope to learn many things that, without him, I could not learn. Say to him that Alagwa demands that he give warning to all his warriors not to touch the white chief. For on him Alagwa's success depends. I have spoken. Go."

CHAPTER XIII

LONG before sunrise the "Maison Bondie" was awake and stirring. Early hours were the rule for travellers in those days on the frontier. While yet the earth was shrouded in shadow and the mists were drifting along the broad ribbon of the river, the sleepers on the bar-room floor were rolling up their blankets and making their hasty toilets before scattering to feed the mules and hitch them to the wagons preparatory for a start to Vincennes and the south. Half an hour later they returned to the bar room to devour the hasty yet heavy meal spread for them.

Jack and his party were astir as early as the rest —Jack and Cato because it was impossible to sleep later on the crowded floor, and Alagwa because of her keen anticipation of the coming day. Cato hurried out to see to the horses and to the mule that Jack had bought for him the night before, and Jack and Alagwa foregathered at the wash basins beneath the shed. Even earlier than the wagoners, they seated themselves at the rough table and hastily devoured the breakfast placed before them, impatient to be gone down the long trail that led to Fort Miami and to Detroit.

Tom Rogers was not to accompany them. In spite of Colonel Johnson's assurances, Jack was by no means certain that either Alagwa or Captain Brito had left the vicinity of Wapakoneta. He was going to Detroit because that seemed the most promising thing to do, but he decided to send Rogers back to Wapakoneta to keep a sharp look-out for both the girl and the man.

"You'll know what to do if you find the man," he said, grimly, as he told Rogers good-by. "War has begun, and Captain Brito has no right to be in this country. If you find the girl, take her to Colonel Johnson and then get word to me as quick as you can."

Amid many calls of *adieu* and *bon voyage* from the kindly French people the travellers set off. The sun was not yet up, but as the three cantered to the ford close beside the blockhouse, that frowned from the southwest corner of the fort, the morning gun boomed and the Stars and Stripes flung out to the breeze. An instant later, as the horses splashed through the shallow water, the sun thrust out through a gash in the clouds above the eastern forest, lighting up the snapping banner with its seventeen emblematic stars. A moment more, and the dew-studded fields began to glisten like diamonds, coruscating with many-colored fire, and the mists that lay along the river shredded and swirled in rainbow tints. The wind sprang up and the vast

arch of the heavens thumped with reverberant murmurs, inarticulate voices of a world new born, thrilling with the ever-fresh hopes with which it had thrilled since the morning of time.

For a few miles the road ran through open fields that stretched along the north bank of the Maumee, a sunlit water strung with necklaces of bubbles that streamed away from the long grasses that lay upon its surface. A faint freshness rose like perfume from the stream, diffusing itself through the amber air. Here and there limbs of sunken trees protruded from the water, token of the great trunks submerged beneath its flood; round them castles of foam swelled and sank, chuckling away into nothingness.

Then came the forest, a mounting line stretching across the path. Fragrant at first and warm with the morning sun it swiftly closed in, dim and moist and cool, arching above the road and the heads of the travellers.

Side by side rode Jack and Alagwa. The girl's heart was beating high, leaping in unison with the stride of the horse that bore her. Gone were the fancies and questionings of the night. For good or for ill she had sent the message to Tecumseh. She had kept faith with those who had cared for her for so many years. She had insured Jack's safety so long as she should remain with him. It was all done and could not be undone. Some day, she knew,

she must pay for it all, pay to the uttermost, but that day was not yet. Till it came she would forget. Resolutely she put all fear of the future behind her, living only in and for the moment.

Jack, too, was happy; the dawn worked its magic on him as it did the girl by his side. Youth, strength, and health jumped together in his veins. He did not know why he was happy. He was not prone to analyze his sensations. If he had thought of the fact at all he would probably have imagined that he was happy because he was going to the seat of war and because he hoped to find there the girl in search of whom he had come so many miles. It would not have occurred to him that he was rejoicing less in the coming end of his journey than he was in the journey itself. Nor would it have crossed his mind that he would have contemplated the journey itself with far less pleasure if he had been alone or had been accompanied only by Cato. He rejoiced in the company of his new boy chum without knowing that he did so.

And he had not thought of Sally Habersham for more than twenty-four hours!

For a time neither spoke. The road was broader and better than that up the St. Marys. For years it had been a thoroughfare along which Indians, traders, and armies had moved in long procession; and it was well trampled, though it still required careful riding to prevent the horses stumbling.

Alagwa, in particular, was silent because she was puzzling over a question that the events of the last evening had made pressing.

If she was ever to find out beyond a doubt the reason why Jack came to Ohio to search for her she must find it out at once. She did not know, could not know, how long her opportunity to question would continue. Fantine had detected her secret and had kept it. At any moment another might detect it and might be less kindly.

Besides, Fantine had spoken as if she was doing wrong in travelling with Jack, even though he thought her a boy. Alagwa wondered at this, for no such conventions held among the Indians, among whom in early days unchastity was so rare that a woman had better be dead than guilty of it.

Jack noticed the girl's abstraction and rode silently, waiting on her mood. At last he grew impatient. "A penny for your thoughts, youngster," he offered, smiling.

Alagwa started. Then she met his eyes gravely. "I wonder much," she said. "The thoughts of the Indian are simple, but those of the white men are forked, and I can not read them. You have come by dim trails over miles of hill and forest to find this girl whom you know never. And the Captain Brito, the chief in the red coat, he also come far, by land and by sea, to seek her. Why do you come? I do not understand."

"Why do I come?" Jack echoed the words, smilingly. "Well! Let's see! I come for several reasons—partly because Tecumseh sent me a belt asking me to come and partly because I was in the mood for adventure, but mostly because the girl is my cousin and because she needs help. I told you all this before, didn't I?"

"Yes! But is not the Count Brito ready to help? Why do you not let him?"

Jack laughed. "I reckon he is," he confessed. "And, so far as I know, he might have been able to make her quite as happy as my people can. I don't really know anything against Brito. His reputation isn't very good, but, Lord! whose is?"

"If he found her, what would he do with her?" Alagwa knew she was on perilous ground, but she went on, nevertheless.

"He'd marry her out of hand, of course. That would give him the Telfair estates, you see. He's said to be heavily in debt, and the money would be a godsend to him. After that a lot would depend on the girl. If she happened to take his fancy he might be very decent to her. And there's no denying that she might like the life he would give her. But the chances are against it, and it's my duty to see that she isn't tricked into it blindfolded. Here in this forest she couldn't possibly understand, any more than you can, what a wonderful thing it is to be mistress of the Telfair estates. If she marries

Brito she gives up everything without having known that she had it."

Alagwa was listening earnestly, trying hard to comprehend the new unthought-of phase of life that Jack was discussing. One thing, however, she fastened on.

"But if *she* refuse to marry *him*?" she questioned. "If she say she will not make his moccasins nor pound his corn?"

"She wouldn't refuse. What! An Indian-bred girl, ignorant of everything outside these Ohio forests, refuse to marry a British officer, who came to her with his hands full of gifts? Refusal isn't worth considering. And if she really should be stubborn he could easily ruin her reputation——"

"Reputation? What is that?"

"It's—it's—I'll be hanged if I know exactly how to explain it so that you can understand. I reckon the Indians don't bother about it. But in civilization, among white people, a girl can't travel alone with a man without getting talked about. Brito wouldn't be likely to stop at trifles. He'd contrive it so that the girl would be compromised and then she'd have to marry him." Jack stopped; he was a clean-mouthed, clean-hearted young fellow, but he was no prude and he could not understand why he should find it so hard to explain matters to the boy at his side. Nevertheless, when he met Alagwa's

wide, innocent eyes, he stopped in despair, tongue-tied and flushing.

Alagwa was clearly startled. "You mean that if a white girl take the long trail with a man she is comprom—compromised—and that she must marry him or that the sachems and the braves will drive her from the council fires?" she questioned.

"Well—something like that. This girl, in her ignorance, would lose her reputation before she knew she had one. And she'd have to marry him to get it back!"

"But—But if he refuse to marry her. If a man travel with a girl and then not marry her?" A deep red had rushed to Alagwa's cheeks; she bent down her head to hide it.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "Brito wouldn't refuse!" he declared.

"I mean not Brito only. I mean any man who had—had compromise a girl. Suppose he refuse to take her to his lodge in honor?"

"Any man who did that would be a scoundrel. The girl's father or brother or friend would call him out and kill him. But, as I say, Brito would marry Estelle, of course. And he wouldn't need to do anything to compel her. She'd marry him willingly enough. You know it."

Alagwa did not deny it. Jack's assertion was correct; no Indian girl would refuse to marry a red-

coat chief. But his earlier assertion concerning the loss of reputation gave her food for thought.

"And you?" she asked. "If you find her what will you do?"

"I? I'd take her home."

"And would it not compromise her to travel so long and dim a trail with you?"

Jack flushed. "It isn't exactly the same thing," he answered at last, hesitatingly. "This is America and we are not so censorious. Europe is very different. Over here we think people are all right till we are forced to think otherwise. In Europe they think them bad from the start. And, of course, I'd protect her all I could. Brito wouldn't. He'd be trying to make her marry him, you see, and I shouldn't."

The girl straightened suddenly in her saddle. "You—you do not want to marry her?" she faltered.

A cloud came over Jack's face. "No!" he said, slowly. "No! I don't want to marry her. I shall never marry anybody."

Startled, the girl looked at him. Then her eyes dropped and for a little she rode silent. When the talk was resumed it was on other subjects.

All that day and all the next the three rode beneath great trees that rose fifty feet from the ground without branch or leaf, and that stood so close together that no ray of sun came through their

arching branches. It was nearly sunset on the second day when they came to the fort built by General Anthony Wayne nearly twenty years before at the junction of the Maumee and the Auglaize—the fort which he had named Defiance, because he declared that he defied “all English, all Indians, and all the devils in hell to take it.” From it he and his army had sallied out to meet and crush the Miamis at the battle of the Fallen Timbers.

The ruins of the fort stood ten feet above the water, on the high point between the Maumee and the Auglaize. Mounting the gentle slope that led upward from the west the travellers descended into a wide half-filled ditch and then climbed a steep glacis of sloping earth that had encircled the ancient palisades. The logs and fascines that had held the ramparts in place had long since rotted away and most of the inner lines of palisades had disappeared. Within their former bounds a few scorched and blackened logs marked where the four block-houses had stood. The narrow ditch that cut the eastern wall and ran down to the edge of the river—the ditch dug to enable Wayne’s soldiers to get water unseen by lurking foes—was half filled by sliding earth. Mounting the crumbling ramparts Jack and Alagwa stood and stared, striving to picture the scene as it was in the days already ancient when the United States flag had flown for the first time in the valley of the Maumee.

For two or three hundred yards on all sides the forest trees had been cut away and their places had been taken by a light growth of maple and scrub oak. On the south, on the west bank of the Auglaize, a single mighty oak towered heavenward—the council tree of all the northern tribes, the tree beneath which fifty years before Pontiac had mustered the greatest Indian council known in all America and had welded the tribes together for his desperate but vain assault upon the growing power of the white men—an assault which Tecumseh was even then striving to emulate.

Beyond the council oak, southward along the Auglaize, stretched an apple orchard planted years before by the indefatigable "Appleseed Johnny." To the north, beyond the Maumee, stood a single apple tree, a mammoth of its kind, ancient already and destined to live and bear for eighty years to come. To the west, along the road down which the three had come, black spots showed where George Ironside's store had stood, where Perault, the baker, had baked and traded, where McKenzie, the Scot, had made silver ornaments at a stiff price for the aborigines, where Henry Ball and his wife, taken prisoners at St. Claire's defeat, had won their captors' good will and saved their lives by working, he as a boatman and she by washing and sewing. Near at hand, but out of sight from the fort, was the house of James Girty, brother of Simon, where

British agents from Canada had continually come to fan the discontent of the Indians against the Americans. Up and down the rivers stretches of weeds and underbrush choked the ground where Wayne had found vast fields of enormous corn. Alagwa's heart burned hotly as she remembered that her people and those of kindred tribes had tilled those fields for centuries before the white man had come into the Ohio country. The fortunes of war had laid them waste. Silently she prayed that the fortunes of war might yet restore them!

Camp was rapidly pitched, the horses fed and picketed for the night, and supper prepared and eaten. By the time it was finished darkness had closed in. The moon was not yet up, though promise of it was silvering the unquiet tops of the eastern forest. But on the exposed point the glimmer of the blazing stars gave light enough to see.

Jack stood up. "The first watch is yours, Cato," he said. "Call me about midnight." "Bob," he turned to the girl, "as you want to watch so badly, I'll call you about two o'clock. I needn't caution you both to be careful."

Alagwa was tired and she slept deeply and dreamlessly. She did not share Jack's fears. Even though she knew her message could not yet have reached Tecumseh, she felt secure under the aegis of his protection. Nevertheless, when Jack waked her and she saw the low moon staring at her along

the western water, she went to her post at the edge of the rampart determined to keep good watch and make sure that no wanderer of the night should creep upon the camp unawares.

From where she sat she could see along both rivers—down the Maumee to the east and up the Auglaize to the south. Up the latter, lay her home at Wapakoneta, a scant twenty miles away. All her travels for the past few days had been west and east again, westward out one leg of a triangle, and then eastward down the other leg, and the net gain of one hundred and fifty miles march, west and east, had been only a score of miles north.

Toward Wapakoneta she strained her eyes, not solely because it was her home, but because if danger came at all it would come from its direction. Tecumseh and his braves had come down the Auglaize less than a week before and laggards might follow him at any time. Or, perhaps, Captain Brito might come north; Alagwa knew that Jack doubted his having left the country.

The dawn was beginning to break. The boles of the trees began to stand separately out; the leaves took on a tinge of green. Over all reigned silence. No faintest sound gave warning of approaching enemies. But the girl well knew that silence did not mean safety. Too often had she heard the Shawnee braves boast of how they crept on their sleeping enemies in the dawn. With renewed determination

she thrust forward her heavy rifle and strained her eyes and ears anew. Jack had trusted her ; she must not fail him.

Suddenly she started. Was something moving beside the great council oak or was it a mere figment of her overstrained nerves. The horses were moving uneasily ; now and then they snorted. Did they scent something? Alagwa remembered that more than once she had heard the Shawnee braves complain that the sleeping whites had been awakened by their uneasy horses.

Abruptly anger swelled in the girl's heart. The braves had no right to attack Jack's party. She had sent word to Tecumseh that it must be protected. True, Tecumseh could not yet have received her message, much less have sent word to respect it. Any Indians who were creeping upon the camp could only be a party of late recruits from Wapakoneta, bound north to join Tecumseh and the British. Nevertheless, they were acting counter to the orders that Tecumseh would surely give. Alagwa knew that her anger was illogical, but she let it flame higher and higher as she watched. If the Shawnees dared to attack——

Again she set herself to listen. She must not rouse the camp without cause. Jack would laugh at her if she were frightened so easily. No! He would not laugh! He was too kind to laugh. But he would despise her. She must remember that she

was playing the man; she must show no weakness. Nothing had moved amid the tree trunks; she had only imagined it. With a sigh of relief she lowered her rifle.

Simultaneously came a crash. A bullet drove the earth from the rampart into her face, filling her eyes and mouth with its spatter. Then from every tree, from every rock, forms, half naked, horrible, painted, came leaping. Bullets whistled before them, rending the tortured air. As they topped the ramparts one, wearing a woodsman's garb, caught his foot and fell forward, sprawling; the others hurled themselves toward Jack and Cato. Alagwa did not stop to think that these were her people, her friends. Instinctively the muzzle of her rifle found the naked breast of the warrior who was springing at Jack, and instinctively she pressed the trigger. Then, heedless of the kick of the heavy rifle, and of the blinding smoke that curled from its barrel, and reckless of the pulsing bullets she threw herself forward. "Stop!" she shrieked, in the Shawnee tongue. "Stop! Tecumseh commands it."

The braves did not stop. Relentlessly they came on. One of them sprang at Cato; his tomahawk flashed in the dawn and the negro went down, sprawling upon the ground. But Jack was up now; his rifle spoke and the Indian who had felled Cato crashed across his body. As Jack turned, a whirling

hatchet struck him in the chest and he staggered backward. But as the man who had thrown it whooped with triumph, Alagwa's pistol barked and he fell. From beneath him Jack rolled to Cato's side and caught up the rifle that had fallen from the negro's flaccid fingers. As he renewed the spilled priming, Alagwa, weaponless, heard a shot and felt her cap fly from her head and go fluttering to the ground. Then Jack marked the man who had fired upon her and shot him down.

Dazed, Alagwa staggered back. For a moment she saw the battlefield, photographed indelibly upon the retinas of her eyes; saw the man at whom Jack had fired clutching at the air as he fell; saw the sole remaining foe, the man who had tripped at the rampart, a huge man, broad and tall, leap at Jack. Then sight and sound were blotted out together.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW long unconsciousness held Alagwa she never knew. It could not have been for very long, however, for when she opened her eyes she saw Jack and the man in hunter's costume, the only foe left standing by that short, fierce fight, still facing each other. She saw them dimly, for, though the dawn was merging fast into the full day, to her eyes darkness still impended.

Nor were her eyes alone affected; a pall seemed to bind both her mind and her muscles, holding her motionless. Idly she watched the two, with a curious sense of detachment; they seemed like figures in a dream whose fate to her meant less than nothing.

The two men had drawn a little apart and were watching each other narrowly. Evidently they had been struggling fiercely, for both were panting; Alagwa could see the heave of their breasts as they drew breath. The advantage seemed to be with the unknown, for Jack was practically unarmed; in his hand he had only a light stick, charred at the end, evidently a survival from some ancient campfire, while the other gripped a pistol.

At last Jack broke the silence. "So, Captain Telfair," he said. "We meet again!"

Slowly into Alagwa's consciousness the meaning of Jack's words penetrated. She did not move; she could not move; but her eyes focused on the man in hunter's garb who leaned forward, half crouching, and glared into Jack's face.

It was Brito. He had not even disguised himself, unless it be counted a disguise to discard his conspicuous red coat in favor of a neutral-tinted shirt and deerskin trousers. Had it not been for Alagwa's dazed condition, she would have known him instantly.

As she watched, he threw back his shoulders and laughed with evil triumph.

"Yes!" he jeered. "We meet once more—for the last time. Your friends hounded me out of Wapakoneta. Damme! but they timed their actions well! Who would have thought they would drive me here just in time to intercept you. The fortunes of war, my dear cousin, the fortunes of war."

Jack did not speak, and the other half raised his pistol and went on, with a sudden change of tone: "You cub," he hissed, "you've got only yourself to blame. I warned you not to come between me and Estelle Telfair. You came—and now you pay for it. I'd be a fool to let you escape when fortune has delivered you into my hand."

Captain Brito's tones were growing more and more deadly. With each word Alagwa expected to hear his pistol roar and to see Jack go crashing

down. Desperately she strove to spring to the rescue. But she could not move; she could not even cry aloud. A more than night-mare helplessness held her fast.

Jack faced his foe undauntedly. Not for an instant did he remove his eyes from Brito's. Despite the disparity in weapons he seemed not at all afraid. "All right!" he said, coolly. "You've got the advantage and I don't doubt you're cur enough to use it. When you're ready, stop yelping and blaze away."

Brito flinched at the contempt in the American's tones, but he held himself in check. "Where is the girl?" he rasped. "Where is she, d— you? Where have you put her? Give her up, and I'll let you crawl home. Quick, now, or you die."

Jack's eyes widened. "The girl?" he echoed. "I haven't"—he broke off—"Find her for yourself," he finished. Alagwa knew that he had begun a denial. Why had he stopped? Had he suddenly guessed who she was? Or was he hoping to trap Brito into some admission—playing with him in the chilly dawn in the very face of death?

Brito half raised his pistol, then lowered it. "I'll find out now!" he gritted. "You're at my mercy. I've got a right to kill you and I'll do it. I'll count three and then, if you don't speak, I'll fire."

Jack shrugged his shoulders. Alagwa noticed that he was edging closer and closer to the man who

threatened him. "Don't wait for me," he answered scornfully. "Shoot and get it over with, you dog. As for telling you anything, it's quite impossible. It isn't done, you know. Shoot, you hound, shoot!"

The last words were drowned in the roar of the heavy pistol. Brito had taken the lad at his word. But as his finger pressed the trigger, Jack struck him swiftly and desperately with his stick across the knuckles of his pistol hand.

The blow was light but it was sufficient. Diverted, the ball went wide, burning but not breaking the skin on Jack's side above his heart. Before the roar of the pistol had died away, Jack had sprung in. His fist caught the Englishman between the eyes.

Bull as he was, the latter reeled backward. The useless pistol, jerked from his hand, flew through the air and thudded upon the ground. An instant he clutched at the air; then, like a cat, he was on his feet, launching forward to meet Jack's assault.

In England boxing was in tremendous favor, and even in America, prone to more violent methods, it was in high esteem. Rich and poor, peer and peasant, alike prided themselves on their strength and quickness in feint and blow. Prize fighters were honored, not merely by the rabble but by those who held themselves to be the salt of the earth. Brito had fought many a time, both for anger and for pleasure. Jack, less quarrelsome and less fond of the sport, was yet well trained in the use of his fists.

Furiously the two men crashed together, Brito striving to crush his foe beneath his greater weight, and Jack striving vainly to gain room for a clean, straight stroke. Swift and brutal came the blows, short half-arm jabs, cruel and punishing. Once Jack was beaten to his knees, but he struggled up, striking blindly but so furiously that Brito staggered back.

But for the moment Jack had no breath left to follow up his advantage and Brito none to renew the assault. Face to face they stood, with blood-streaked faces, gaping mouths, and sobbing chests, each glad of the respite but each determined that it should not be for long.

For an instant Brito's eyes wandered about the ground, seeking a weapon; for an instant Jack's eyes followed the Englishman's and in that instant he saw Alagwa where she lay crumpled against the rampart. A yell of fury burst from his lips and he sprang forward. Brito saw him coming and threw his weight into a blow that would have ended the fight if it had gone home. But it did not go home! Jack dodged beneath it and drove his right with deadly force against the other's thick neck. Then as Brito swung round, giddy from the impact, Jack struck him on the chin and sent him reeling back a dozen feet, clawing at the air, till he stumbled across the body of an Indian and fell upon his back.

Jack bent above him, fist drawn back. "Sur-

render," he panted. " Surrender! Or by God——"

" Not yet!" Brito's outflung hand had closed upon a hatchet that had fallen from the dead brave's hand. Upward he hurled it with despairing fury.

Whether directed by chance or by skill the cast went home. The head of the whirling axe struck Jack squarely upon his forehead, just at the roots of his hair. He gasped, wavered, flung up his hands, and sank down.

Something snapped in Alagwa's brain. The night-mare numbness that had held her vanished. Together mind and straining body burst the bonds that had held them. Mad with fury she sprang to her feet and hurled herself at Brito, striking blindly with bare, harmless, open hands. No thought of self was in her mind. Jack was dead; she thought only to avenge him.

Brito was scrambling to his feet. Even half risen, his great bulk towered above the girl's slender form. But so sudden and so furious was her assault that he tottered backward. But as he reeled he clutched at her left wrist and held it, dragging her with him, striking, struggling, fighting like a trapped wolverene. He reached for the other wrist, but before he could grasp it, the girl set her knee inside of his and tripped him, hurling him headlong. But his grip upon her did not relax, and together on the ground the two rolled, desperately locked. Had Brito been less exhausted

and the girl less maddened the end would have come instantly; only her fury postponed it.

Suddenly her chance came. Beneath her straining body she felt a weapon and caught it up. It was Brito's pistol. As she raised it Brito snatched for it. His grip fell short and, overbalanced, he left his head unguarded. Before he could recover Alagwa had struck him across the forehead with the heavy barrel and had torn herself free.

Like a cat she sprang to her feet. But Brito was up, too, nearly as quickly; and she had no strength left to renew her assault.

For a moment the Englishman stood, rocking slowly to and fro, striving to clear his eyes of the blood that was trickling from the furrow the pistol had traced across his forehead. Then he gave a great shout:

“Estelle!” he cried. “Estelle! Damme! It’s Estelle.” He paused, staring. Then he laughed hoarsely. “Plucky, too!” he cried. “A true Tel-fair, fit mate for a man.” He flung out his hands. “To me! Little one!” he cried. “To me! I liked you when I saw you first. But now—By God! You’re a Valkyrie, a Boadicea. To think of your daring to fight with me. You! A woman and a hop-o'-my thumb. By God! I love you for it. Come to me.” He stumbled forward.

Alagwa sprang away. As she did so her hand touched the powder-horn that had clung to her belt

through all that furious encounter. Her bullet-pouch, too, was in place. Lithely she dodged Brito's rush, and as he blundered past she poured a charge of powder into the mouth of her pistol and rammed home the wad.

Brito saw and read her motion. The man's pluck was good, for he lurched toward her, laughing. "No! No! No! Estelle!" he cried. "Don't shoot! You've lost one kinsman already"—he glanced towards Jack's silent form—"and you can't afford to lose another. Come! Lady! Cousin! Come to me. I'll take you to England. I'll make you queen of them all"—He broke off. Alagwa had forced home the bullet and had primed the pan. Now she raised the pistol.

Brito saw it and changed his note. "D— you, you hussy!" he yelled. "I'll choke—"

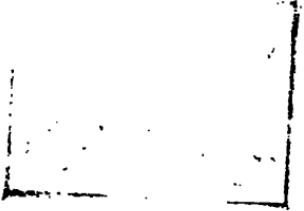
The pistol roared and he reeled back, clutching at his side. Then he crashed down.

For an instant Alagwa stared at him, noting the red stain that was widening on his shirt beneath the heart. Then she let the pistol fall and turned away. Staggeringly she made her way to Jack's side and sank down beside him. Into his torn hunting shirt she slipped her hand till it lay above his heart.

No faintest throb rewarded her. No quiver of lip or eye negatived the red wound upon his brow. Silently her head fell forward. It was all over. Jack was dead. Without a gasp hope died.



ALAGWA SHOOTS CAPTAIN BRITO



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CHAPTER XV

LONG Alagwa sat, staring into the face of her dead. She knew now, for once and ever more that he was her dead, hers, hers, hers alone. A week before she had not known that he existed. Four days before she had thought she hated him for the woe his people had inflicted upon hers. Two days before she had offered to fight with him to the death, but she had told herself that she had done this because he was facing her foes as well as his. Now, only a moment before, she had shot down her British kinsman, the ally of her people, in vengeance for his death. In dull wonder her thoughts traversed step by step the path that had brought her to this end, until in one blinding flash of enlightenment, she read her own soul. He was hers, her mate, created for her by Gitchemanitou the Mighty, foreordained for her in the dim chaos out of which the world was shaped.

And he was dead! He had never known her for what she was, had never thought to call her wife. To him she had been a comrade only, not bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. And yet she knew that he had held her dear; day by day she had felt that he was holding her dearer and dearer. If she had been granted time——

But she had not been granted time, for he was dead. And she was left desolate. She could not even follow him to the Happy Hunting Grounds, for they were for men, not women.

Suddenly a thought came to her. She remembered that she was dressed as a boy and that her costume had deceived all the men who had seen her. Might she not deceive also the guardians who waited at the entrance of the trail that led to the Hunting Grounds? If she faced them boldly, manfully, as a warrior should, might she not win her way past them to Jack's side? There would be no sharp-eyed women there to spy her out, and once within she would stay forever. Never by word or by sign would she betray herself; always she would remain Jack's little comrade. No one would ever guess.

She would try it. Her hand dropped to her belt and closed on the slender hilt of the hunting knife that hung there. Then it slowly fell away.

Before she played the man and started on the long, dark trail, she would be very woman. The moments that life had denied her, that the Happy Hunting Grounds might ever deny her, she would steal now, now, from the cold hand of death himself.

Desperately she searched the features of her dead. They were pinched and pallid with the awful pallor of death. Lower and lower she bent, yearning over him, more of the mother than of the sweetheart in her mien. Gently she kissed his forehead,

his eyelids, his cheeks, his firm, bold mouth, taking toll where she would, bride's kiss and widow's kiss in one. Again and again she pressed her warm lips to his till beneath her caress they seemed to warm, reddening to tints of life.

Suddenly his lips twitched and his eyes opened. "Bob!" he muttered. Then once more his eyelids drooped.

Alagwa screamed, short and sharp. He was not dead. Jack was not dead. Gitchemanitou the Mighty had given him back to her. Hers it was to keep him.

Gently she laid his head upon the ground and sprang up. One of Cato's pans lay close at hand; she snatched it and raced to the river down the protected way dug seventeen years before by General Wayne.

Soon she was back, bringing a mass of sopping water plants. Over the red wound on Jack's forehead she bound them.

Under her touch Jack's eyes reopened. But they did not meet her anxious gaze; they rolled helplessly, uncontrolled by his will. His lips formed words, but they were thick and harsh. "Where—where—No, he's killed. I—saw—him—fall. He—he—Bob! Bob!" His voice ran up in a shriek.

Alagwa bent till her face almost touched his. "I'm here, Jack," she breathed. "Can't you see me?"

The lad's eyes snapped into focus. For an instant they brightened with recognition; then they fell away. But he had recognized her. "I thought you—were dead," he muttered. "I saw you fall. I—I tried to kill him for that—more than for all else. But—but—" his words wandered.

The color flowed into Alagwa's cheeks. Her eyes were very soft. "I thought you were dead, too," she murmured. "But we are both alive—both alive!" Her voice thrilled with wonder.

Jack's fingers fumbled till they found the girl's free hand and closed upon it. "You've been a bully little comrade," he muttered. "Bully little comrade! Bully little com—" His voice died weakly away. His eyes closed for a moment, then opened again. "Cato?" he questioned.

Alagwa straightened. She had forgotten Cato since she had seen him go down beneath the Indian's tomahawk. Anxiously she looked about her. Then, abruptly, she started, stiffening like a wild thing at sight of the hunter.

Not a score of feet away sat Brito, clutching his wounded side, glaring at her with blood-shot eyes. Her hand fell to the knife in her belt, and she gathered her feet beneath her, every muscle tense, ready to spring.

For a moment the picture held, then Jack's fingers tightened on her other hand, holding her back.

"What is it? What is it?" he mumbled, piteously. "What is it?"

"Nothing. It's nothing!" Alagwa's voice was low and soothing. Brito seemed severely wounded. He was not attempting to approach. Perhaps he could not. She leaned forward slightly, so as to cut off Jack's line of sight. He must not know. Not till the last possible moment must he know. Forward she leaned, features rigid, teeth locked behind set jaws, nostrils distended, staring Brito in the face.

The Englishman tried to meet her eyes but his own dropped. He tried to rise, but his strength failed him. Then he began to edge himself backward, eyes fixed on the girl. Soon he reached the glacis and dragged himself slowly up it. At the top he paused, a momentary flash of his former spirit burning in his eyes.

"Bravo! Little one!" he faltered, so feebly that the girl could scarcely hear the words, "Bravo! You're a true Telfair. I wanted you before for your money. Now I want you for yourself. You're mine and I'll have you. I'll have you, understand? Sooner or later I'll have you. Remember!" His clutch upon the crest of the glacis loosened and he slipped out of sight.

Alagwa stared at the spot where he had vanished, listening to the thudding of the soft earth into the ditch beneath him. Toward what refuge he was

striving she did not know, but she was sure that he could not reach it on his own feet. If all of his party were slain, and she did not doubt that they were, he could escape only by water. Both the Auglaize and the Maumee below the fort were navigable for small boats, and if Brito and his comrades had come in one, he might regain it and float down the Maumee, possibly to safety.

Should she let him go? No pity was in her heart. The frontier was grim; it translated itself into primitive emotions, taking no account of the shadings of civilization or of the blending of good and evil that inheres in every man. Those brought up amid its environment hated their enemies and loved their friends; they took no middle course. Brito was an enemy and Alagwa hated him. All her life she had been taught to let no wounded enemy escape. Brief had been her acquaintance with the Englishman, but it had been long enough to show her what manner of man he was. Should she let him go to come back again, perhaps to destroy the thread of life that still remained in the helpless man by her side. Or should she finish the work she had begun and make Jack safe against at least this deadly foe. Feverishly she fingered the hilt of her knife.

As she hesitated Jack's plaintive voice came again. "Who's talking" he mumbled. "I—I can't see. I can't think. I—I—Bob! Bob!"

"I'm here, Jack!" Alagwa's fingers tightened upon his.

Over the lad's face came a look of peace. "Something's happened to me," he breathed. "But you'll stay with me, won't you, Bob?"

"Yes! Yes! I'll stay with you. Don't fear. I'll never leave you."

"Good. . . . I—I seem weak somehow. Did somebody hit me? . . . I want to get up. I must get up. Help me." The lad caught at her arm and tried to pull himself up.

Alagwa did not hesitate. She was sure that, for a time at least, he would far better lie flat upon the ground. "Don't get up!" she commanded. "Lie still. You have been wounded. Very nearly have you taken the dark trail to the Land of the Hereafter. You must lie still." Her voice was imperative.

Jack yielded to it. "All right!" he sighed. "But—But I want Cato."

Once more Alagwa remembered the negro. She stood up and looked about her.

The dawn was long past. The sun had risen above the tree tops and was flooding the fort with yellow glory, making plain the havoc that the brief fight had wrought, searching out the tumbled dead and crowning their broken forms with pitiful gold. Proné they lay, grotesquely tossed, grim with the majesty of death. Round them life bourgeoned,

careless of their fate. The waters rippled, the wind whispered overhead, the birds chorused in the tree tops, the jewelled flies, already gathering, buzzed in the glowing air. Far down the Maumee, on the sunlit water, a black spot shaped itself for a moment, and then was gone. Alagwa saw it and guessed that it was Captain Brito and his boat.

Cato was lying face down where he had fallen. Across his body lay that of the warrior who had stricken him down. Close at hand lay two other braves, their well-oiled bodies and shaven heads glistening in the sun. Alagwa did not even look at them; they were not friends—they were outlaws—outlaws suborned by Brito to attack Jack because he had been in search of her. The Shawnees were still her friends—she was still true to Tecumseh. But these were private foes. She had been trained in a hard school and their deaths affected her no more than would those of so many wild beasts.

She bent over Cato. His posture, to her trained eyes, spoke eloquently of death. Nevertheless, she would see. Panting, for the fight had torn open the half-healed wound upon her leg, she dragged the dead Indian away and gently fingered the long, broad gash that ran across the negro's head. Blood from it had stiffened his wool into a mat of gore. The hatchet had struck slantingly or had been deflected, but it had cut deep. Never had Alagwa seen such a wound upon the head of a living man. Sorrow-

fully she stared at it, for Cato had been kind to her. At last, hopelessly but determinedly she rolled his body over and placed her hand above his heart.

It was beating, slowly but strongly.

Amazed, the girl sprang up. Heedless of her injured leg she raced to the river and back again and poured the cooling water on his head, washing away the blood that had run down his forehead and had filled his eyes.

Instantly Cato gasped and groaned. "Here! You Mandy," he protested. "You quit dat! Don't you go flingin' no more of Mars' Telfair's plates at me. Massa ain't gwine to stand havin' his plates busted that a-way, no, he ain't, not by no nigger living. You hear me."

Alagwa heard but she did not understand. The negro accent and forms of speech were still partly beyond her. But she knew that Cato was alive and she dashed what was left of the water into his blood-streaked face.

The shock completed her work. Intelligence snapped back into the negro's eyes and he sat up. "Lord! Massa!" he cried. "What's done happen? Whar dem Injuns go? Whar's Mars' Jack?"

"Mr. Jack's badly hurt. Very near he go to die. But Gitchemanitou save him. You are wounded, too. I thought you were dead."

Cato fingered the cut upon his head. Then he grinned. "Lord!" he exclaimed. "Dat Injun

oughter knowed better than to hit a nigger on the head. But"—his grin faded—"but whar Mars' Jack?"

"Over yonder!" Alagwa gestured with her head. "But wait. Let me wash and bind up your head. Sit still."

Much against his will Cato waited while the girl's deft fingers washed away the caked blood and bound a poultice of healing leaves across the gaping cut. Then he took the hand that she offered and scrambled to his feet and tried to make his way to Jack's recumbent form.

But at the first step he limped and groaned. "Lord!" he muttered. "I done bust my feet mighty bad somehow. But I gwine to git to Mars' Jack. Yes, suh, I certainly am."

With many groans he made his way across the ground to Jack's side. "Mars' Jack! Mars' Jack!" he cried. "You ain't dead, is you?"

The sound of his voice roused Jack and he opened his eyes. Thankfully Alagwa saw that he made no attempt to rise. "Hello, Cato!" he mumbled. "Is that you. No, I'm not dead. I'm all right. How about you, Cato?"

"I'se all right, Mars' Jack, 'cep'n that my feet hurts mighty bad. Dat Injun hit me a whack over the head, and that hurts. But seems like my feet hurts wusser."

Jack's eyes twinkled. "You must have been

standing on a stone when that Indian hit you over the head," he said. "I reckon he drove your feet down on the stone mighty hard."

Jack laughed weakly. Then suddenly an expression of terror came into his face and his whole form seemed to shrink and crumble. When Alagwa reached his side he was unconscious.

Long but vainly the girl worked over him. He did not revive and an icy cold hand seemed to close about her heart.

From her childhood she had been familiar with wounds. With the Shawnees, as with most other Indians, it was a point of honor to leave no wounded friend upon the battlefield. At whatever cost, for whatever distance, they brought home all who survived the sharp deadly struggles of the day. Not once but many times Alagwa had bound up wounds and had cared for injured warriors. Jack's condition had not at first seemed strange to her. She had supposed him only dazed from the blow he had received and needing only a brief rest to regain his strength. But now, abruptly, there flashed into her mind the memory of two warriors, brought home from a foray, who bore no visible wounds but who were yet wrecked in body and in mind. Like Jack they had been struck upon the head. Like him they had revived and had seemed to be gathering strength. Then abruptly they had collapsed and had lain feebly quiescent, dazed, with wandering lips

and eyes, for weeks and months before they died. She did not know what the white men called this, but she knew the thing itself.

Was Jack to be like this? It could not be! Passionately her heart cried out against it. And yet—and yet—even thus she was glad, glad, that Gitchemanitou had given him back to her. Only let him live, let him live, and—

But he could not live where he was. The ruined fort was a point of extreme danger. One war party bound for the north had already passed it on their way down the Auglaize, and at any moment another might follow. None would pass the ruins of the ancient fort without visiting it, even if no sign of the recent struggle were visible from the water or from the trail along the bank. If Jack was to be ill for a long time, she must get him back to Fort Wayne.

And she must do it all. Cato was a splendid servant but useless so far as initiative was concerned. On her and her alone the responsibility must rest. Desperately she looked around, seeking inspiration.

While she had worked over Jack the sun had mounted higher and higher. The tall forest trees that ringed the clearing shimmered in the golden downpour, the fretted tracery of their branches quivering against the burnished vault of the sky. The forest creatures had grown used to the presence of men and were going about the business of their

lives unafraid. A huge red squirrel scurried up one of the few remaining palisades of the ancient circuit and sat upon its top, chattering. The water in the river rippled incessantly as fish or turtle or snake came and went. Great bullfrogs croaked on the banks. From every tuft of grass and every rock and log rose the shrill stridulation of insects. Gorgeous butterflies in black and gold and white fluttered about the stricken field. The mule and the two horses were uninjured and were cropping the sweet grass, heedless of the fate that had overtaken their masters.

But more than horses was needed. Jack could not ride and even if he could cling to the saddle he would do so at the peril of his life.

There was nothing to do but to make a travois—a structure of dragging poles by which the Indians transported their sick and wounded, their tents, and household goods. Calling Cato to saddle the horses, she picked up the hatchet that had split the negro's scalp, and hurried out of the fort to return a moment later with two long straight poles. These, with Cato's help, she firmly bound, butt up, on either side of her horse, which she knew to be the gentler of the two, then lashed together the long flexible ends that trailed out behind. Backward and forward, across the angle between, she wove the rope that had bound the pack. Upon this network she fastened blankets till the whole had become a sort

of pointed hammock, with sloping flexible sides, one end of which rested on the ground while the other sloped upward ending well out of reach of the horse's heels. By the time she had finished Cato had packed the camp equipment on the back of the mule.

With some difficulty the two dragged Jack upon the travois. Then Alagwa took the bridle of the horse.

"I lead," she said. "You ride other horse."

Willingly the negro climbed to the saddle. "I'se mighty glad to," he declared, gratefully. "Lor', Massa, if you knowed how my feet hurt! I reckon Mars' Jack was right. I must ha' been standin' on a rock."

Four days later—for it took twice as long to go from Fort Defiance to Fort Wayne as it had taken to go from Fort Wayne to Defiance—Alagwa stood in Peter Bondie's house in the room that had served her for a night, watching with dumb fear-filled eyes as the surgeon from the fort straightened up from his long inspection of Jack's exhausted form.

"Concussion of the brain," he said, at last. "He'll get well, but he'll be ill for weeks and probably for months."

CHAPTER XVI

THE drama of the war was unfolding. The first act was filled with martial music and with the tramp of armed men marching northward to wrest from the British king the remainder of his great American empire and to extend the bounds of the United States to the foot of the aurora borealis. War had been declared in the middle of June and the late summer of 1812 saw three armies afoot, one at the western end of Lake Erie, one at Niagara, and one on Lake Champlain.

The first clash of arms came in the west. Burning with zeal, General Hull and his soldiers cut a road through the Black Swamp, occupied Detroit, and early in July crossed into Canada. The country rang with the news of their triumphant advance. The country did not realize, though it was soon to do so, that for years the British in Canada had been providing against this very eventuality, and had been building a red bulwark against attack. For years they had been winning the good will of the Indians with presents, had been cajoling them with soft words, and had been providing them with arms and ammunition. And when the war came they had their reward. While Hull was marching so gaily forward thousands of savages were closing in be-

hind him, surrounding him with a red cordon that he was never to break. At first they moved slowly, lacking a white leader. Soon they were to find one in General Brock and the Americans were to realize too late that they had to meet not merely a handful of British and Canadians but a horde of the fiercest foes that any land could produce, some of whom, like Tecumseh, hoped to establish an Indian kingdom whose barriers would hold back the Americans forever, but most of whom fought merely for the spoils of war, secure in the British promise to give them a free hand and to protect them against any ultimate vengeance like that which had befallen them when they had risen in the past.

All this, however, lay in the womb of the future in July and early August, when Jack was slowly fighting his way back to health. The wound on his head healed rapidly, disappearing even before that on Cato's thick skull, and by the first of August he had recovered much of his physical strength though little of his mental powers. One day he would look out upon the world with sane eyes, gladdening Alagwa's sore heart with the hope that her vigil was nearing its end; the next day some trifle, some slight excitement, even some memory, would strike him down, and for days he would toss in delirium or lie in a state of coma that seemed like death itself. It needed all the cheeriness that Fantine could muster and all the assurances that Major

Stickney and Captain Wells could offer to sustain the girl's hope that he would ever be himself again.

Meanwhile information that the war was not going well for the Americans began to trickle in to Fort Wayne or, rather, to the white men adjacent to it who enjoyed the confidence of the Indians.

Owing to his Miami wife, Peter Bondie's affiliations with the Indians were close and he received early news of all that took place at the front. Before any one else at Fort Wayne he knew that Hull had been driven back from Canada to Detroit. He learned almost instantly when Hull's lines of communication were broken and the small force that was bringing cattle and other food to his aid was halted at the River Raisin, and he was kept well informed as the lines about Hull himself grew closer and closer. Lieutenant Hibbs and the garrison at the fort, meanwhile, seemed to dwell in a fool's paradise.

The first publicly admitted news that all was not going well was that of the surrender of the fifty-seven men who garrisoned Fort Michilimackinac, far to the northward. This, however, made little impression. Fort Michilimackinac was unimportant and was isolated; its surrender amounted to nothing. The next day, however, word was received from General Hull that Fort Dearborn, one hundred and fifty miles to the west, on the site where Chicago now stands, was to be evacuated.

Lieutenant Hibbs was instructed to consult with Major Stickney and Captain Wells and to devise some means by which the order could be safely transmitted and the garrison safely withdrawn. The next day Captain Wells, with one white man and thirty-five supposedly friendly Miami Indians, set out for Fort Dearborn to carry the orders. Even this, however, did not disturb the optimism that ruled in the fort. Dearborn, like Michilimackinac, was isolated and unimportant.

The first news of the British and Indian successes, slight though they were, bewildered Alagwa. In vain she assured herself that she ought to rejoice. Her friends were winning. They were driving back the braggart Americans. They were regaining all that the slow years had stolen from them. Tecumseh's drama of a great Indian kingdom would come true. She ought to be glad! glad! glad!

Nevertheless, her heart sank lower and lower. She could not understand why this should be so. She was no friend to the Americans, she told herself. She loved Jack, but she hated his people. She was still an ally to the Shawnees and to the British. She hoped, hoped, hoped that they would overwhelm the Americans and drive them back forever. But still the pain at her heart grew sharper and sharper.

Moreover her own actions began to trouble her. No longer could she keep up the fiction that she

was a prisoner. Prisoners do not bring their captors back to the jail from which they have escaped. Moreover she had conspired against this very fort, under whose protecting walls she had sought refuge for herself and Jack. Gloze the fact over as she might she could not wholly put away the thought that her acts were both treacherous and ungrateful. Throughout July she had seen nothing of the runner and had heard no word to tell that Tecumseh had received her message or had acted upon it. None of the Miamis, who lived in the vicinity, had approached her with any word from the Shawnee chieftain. Early in August, however, Metea, chief of the Pottawatomies, who lived a little to the west, sought her out and gave her to understand that he knew who she was and to assure her that any message she wished to send to Tecumseh would be transmitted.

"Metea goes to Yondotia (Detroit)," he said. "Even now his moccasins are on his feet and his tomahawk in his belt. Has the white maiden any word to send?"

His words struck Alagwa with a panic which she found herself unable to conceal. Falteringly she declared that she had no word to send other than that she was faithful to the redmen's cause and would help it all she could. She did not repeat her message about the scarcity of powder at the fort. When Metea had gone she hid herself and wept.

The next day, however, Jack took a sudden turn for the better, and the girl's joy in his improvement drove all misgivings from her mind.

Once it had begun Jack's improvement grew apace. A week went by without sign of relapse. His eyes shone with the light of reason; his voice grew smooth; his figure straightened; almost he seemed himself again. The surgeon from the fort, however, still counselled caution.

With returning strength the lad began to fret about the failure of his mission to the northwest and to declare that he must be off to Detroit in search of his cousin. In vain Alagwa urged upon him that he must be fully restored to health before he attempted to exert himself, and in vain the surgeon warned him that any sudden stress, either mental or physical, was likely to bring about a relapse. Jack felt well and strong and chafed bitterly at his inaction.

One day, a little past the middle of August, he and Alagwa (with Cato hovering in the background) sought temporary refuge from the heat beneath the great tree before the door of the hotel—the tree whence Alagwa had sounded the call of the whip-poor-will on that June night nearly two months before.

August had worked its merciless will on the land. The bare ground was baked and hard beaten and the turf was dry as powder. The brooks that had

wandered across the prairie to join the Maumee were all waterless. The air was heavy; not a breath of wind was stirring. Overhead the sky quivered, glittering like a great brazen bowl. Inside the hotel the heat was unbearable, but beneath the tree some respite could be gained.

Jack was talking of the one topic that engrossed his thoughts in those days.

“Think of myself!” he echoed, to Alagwa’s pleadings. “I’ve thought of myself too long! I’ve got to think of that poor girl now. What in God’s name has become of her while I have been chasing shadows. First I let Williams make a fool of me and lead me out of my way. Then I make a fool of myself by camping for the night in the most dangerous place in all the northwest—and get my silly head beaten in to pay for it. And now I’m lying here idle while she—Good God! Where is she and what is she doing?”

Alagwa said nothing. She knew that by one word she could end Jack’s anxiety, and again and again she had tried to utter it. But always it died unspoken upon her lips. If Jack persisted in periling his life by starting out too soon, and if she could stop him only by confessing her secret, she would confess it. But she would not do so till the last possible moment.

Jack jumped to his feet. “And where’s Rogers?” he demanded. “What’s become of him? I told him

to report to me from time to time. By heavens, I won't wait here much longer! I'm well now, and if that fool doctor doesn't pretty soon say I can start, I'll start without his permission. He didn't do anything for me, anyhow. It was you who saved my life"—he turned on the girl—"it was you. You bully little pal, you."

Alagwa looked down. Jack's voice had a note of tenderness that she had not heard before.

"Yes! It was you," he went on. "You're a hero, whether you know it or not. You won't tell me much about what happened after Brito struck me down, but Cato's told me a lot. And apart from that you've nursed me like a little brick. No woman could have been more tender. And I won't forget it."

Alagwa's heart was singing. She dared not raise her head, lest Jack should see the love light shining in her eyes and guess her secret. Persistently she looked down.

Then suddenly she heard Jack's voice, in quite a new note. "By George!" he cried. "There comes Rogers."

Over the dusty road from the fort the old man came trotting. When he saw the light of reason in Jack's eyes his own lighted. "Dog my cats!" he cried. "But I'm plumb glad to see you, Jack. I been a-lookin' for you all up and down the Maumee and I never got a smell of you till I met that skunk

Williams just now and he told me you was plumb crazy. Lord! Lord! How people do like to lie. If they wouldn't talk so much they wouldn't lie so much and——”

Jack interrupted. He was eager to divert the old man to the missing girl.

Rogers was entirely willing to be diverted. He did not care what he talked about so long as he talked.

“I ain’t got any news of her,” he declared. “She’s plumb disappeared. She ain’t nowhere about Wapakoneta; that’s certain. I reckon she’s gone north, and if you ask me I reckon she’s gone with that big cuss in the red coat. He’s the sort that takes the eyes of the girls. You were right in ‘sposing that he didn’t go north as soon as Colonel Johnson thought he did. He didn’t go till a day or two before I got to Girty’s Town, an’ maybe he didn’t go them. But he’s gone now.”

Rogers stopped to take breath and Jack nodded. In telling the tale of the attack at Fort Defiance Alagwa had said nothing about Brito or his part in the fight, and Jack had followed her example. After all, the affair was a family one and he saw no need of taking the people at Fort Wayne into his confidence. Even now he merely accepted Rogers’s opinion and did not inform him that he knew very well indeed the time at which Brito had left the headwaters of the Auglaize.

Rogers, indeed, gave him little chance to say anything. Vigorously he rattled on. "There's a letter coming from Piqua for you," he said. "I reckon it's from your home folks. I saw it there and I'd a-brung it, but I wasn't certain that I was coming here when I left. I guess it'll get here to-night on a wagon that's coming. I guess it's from your sweetheart."

Jack's face had lighted up at the old man's mention of a letter, but it clouded slightly at his last words. "Not from a sweetheart, no," he declared. "I have no sweetheart. I shall never marry!"

"Sho! You don't tell me!" Rogers's eyes twinkled incredulously. "Well! You got time enough to change your mind. You ain't like me. I got to hurry. I don't want to deceive you none, so I'll own up that I ain't as young as I was once." He glanced out of the corners of his eyes and saw Fantine coming from the hotel toward the party. Instantly he raised his voice and went on.

"If I could find a nice woman, somebody that's big enough to balance a little shaver like me, I reckon I'd fall plumb hard in love with her," he declared. "You don't know no such a woman round about here, do you now, Jack?"

Jack did not answer, for Fantine had come up. "Bon jour, M. Rogers," she cried. "You have been away long, n'est ce pas? What do you talk about, eh?"

Rogers grinned at her. "Oh! We was talking about gettin' married," he declared brazenly. "Jack here was saying he was never goin' to marry."

Fantine glanced swiftly at Jack. Then out of the corner of her eye she searched Alagwa's face. "Oh! La! La!" she cried. "These men! Truly they all of a muchness. When they are young they all run after a pretty face and if they lose it they think the world stops. Later they know better. M. Jack will seek a bride some day. And when you do, M. Jack, see that you choose one who will stand at your side when you face the peril, one who will draw the sword and pistol to defend you. Do not choose some fair lady who will faint at the sight of blood and leave you to your foes. That goes not on the frontier. Do I not know it, me?"

Jack stared. There was a note in the voice of the light-hearted French woman that he had never heard before. For a moment it bewildered him. Then he laughed.

"Oh! No! No!" he cried. "I want no such bride as that. You have described a friend, a comrade—yes, that's it, a good comrade—like my little Bob here." He glanced at Alagwa affectionately, but she had bowed her face, and he could not see it. "But I would not choose such a one for a bride," he went on. "I would never marry such a comrade, brave and helpful though she might be."

If I ever marry, I shall marry some sweet gentle lady who never saw the frontier, who knows nothing of war, who has tread no rougher measures than those of the minuet. I want a bride whom I can shield from the world, not a mannish creature who can protect me. I want—Good Lord! What's the matter?"

Alagwa had sprung to her feet, gasping. For a moment she stood; then she turned and fled to the house. Fantine glared at Jack; her lips moved but no sound came from them. For once, the situation was beyond her. With a hopeless gesture she followed the girl. Rogers stood staring.

Jack caught at Cato's shoulder and scrambled to his feet, his face was white. "What—what—what"—he babbled. "Good Lord! What—"

Half way to the hotel Fantine turned. She had remembered Jack's condition. "Nom d'un nom!" she cried. "Sit you down, M. Jack. It is nothing, nothing. It—is the heat. Never have I seen its like. The boy is overwrought. I will calm him. Sit you down! Do you want to fall ill again?"

Jack sat down, not because Fantine's words satisfied him, but because his strength was failing. He leaned against the tree, staring at the house into which Alagwa had disappeared.

At last he looked up at Rogers and Cato. "I don't understand," he muttered. "I've hurt Bob

some way. But how? I wouldn't hurt him for the world. How did I do it? How did I do it?" Heedless of the others' bewildered answers he babbled on, wonderingly.

After a while he got up and went slowly to his room and lay down. An hour later, when Alagwa remorsefully sought him, he was sleeping heavily. Frightened lest this might mean a relapse, but not daring to awake him, the girl stole out of the room and joined the others at the table.

CHAPTER XVII

EXCEPT for Jack and his party the Maison Bondie was entirely bare of guests. The wagoners who made the place their home during their periodic visits to Fort Wayne had that very morning driven away to the south. Others would soon arrive, probably on the morrow, but until they came the Bondies were alone. Rogers had gone, presumably to the fort. Fantine had been busy comforting Alagwa, and when she remembered him he had disappeared.

Perhaps it was as well, for as Fantine and Alagwa and Peter's Miami wife sat down to supper Peter came hurrying in, bringing news that destroyed the tastefulness even of Fantine's cooking.

Captain Wells and Captain Heald and the entire garrison of Fort Dearborn had been massacred. The news had just reached the Miami village. It had not yet reached the fort or any white man connected with the garrison—not even Major Stickney or the priest at the Catholic church—and probably would not reach them until the morrow. But it was not to be doubted. The thirty-five Miamis who had gone with Captain Wells to help in the evacuation of Fort Dearborn were all back at their homes. But the white men had perished.

With bated breath the Bondies discussed the massacre. They all knew Captain Wells; the Bondies had known him for twenty years and Alagwa for a few weeks only, but they all loved him. Forty years before, when a boy, he had been captured by the Miami Indians, had been brought up with them, and had married a Miami woman, the daughter of a chief. Later he had become interpreter and agent for the United States and was supposed to be in high favor with the Indians of all tribes. None of his associations, however, had availed to save him. Where would the blow fall next? Peter Bondie strove to console himself with the fact that the Miamis, who lived close at hand, were his sworn friends, and that the killing had been done by the Pottawatomies, whose homes were a hundred miles to the west, though many of them were always to be seen at and near Fort Wayne. But the consolation was rapidly losing its force.

Peter and Fantine were debating whether Peter should at once seek Major Stickney, who was ill with ague, and tell him the news or should wait till the morrow, when the Miamis who had accompanied Captain Wells would be ready to make formal report. Alagwa sat silent, troubled over the news, but thinking more of Jack's words of the afternoon than she did of the possible consequences of the massacre.

Abruptly a shadow darkened the door and

through it, into the room, stepped Metea. Offering no explanation of his presence nor of his absence for the past two weeks he sat down at the table and began to devour the food which Peter's Miami wife placed before him. When at last he had finished he stood up.

"Behold," he said, "my moccasins are worn with much travel. I come quickly from Yondotia (Detroit). I bring great news. The American chief and all his men have surrendered. He was a coward. When the red man shook his tomahawk he fell down and cried out. Over Yondotia now flies the flag of the white father who lives across the great water."

No one spoke. The news from Fort Dearborn had been stirring but this from Detroit was overwhelming, both in its immensity and in the consequences it portended. The Bondies, Alagwa, and even Metea himself had come, through many years' experience, to look upon the Americans as foes who fought to the death and who, even when conquered, took bitter toll of those who slew them. That Captain Heald and his garrison had been massacred was terrifying but not altogether amazing, for he was outnumbered and isolated. But that an army larger than any that had ever before been mustered in the northwest should have surrendered tamely, without a blow, seemed incredible. If it were true—and none questioned it—it would mean

the destruction of American prestige and the rallying of thousands of savages to the British standard.

Metea voiced the situation. "The white men are women. They have talked much and have pretended to be great chiefs and the red man has believed them. But now he knows. They are women. At Yondotia they begged the redcoats to save them from the wrath of the red men. It was the red men who conquered and they will conquer again."

Metea spoke the truth, though it was left to a later day to recognize it. All the early disasters of the war to the American arms were due not to the prowess of the British nor of the Indians, but to the fear of massacre. Hull's surrender was not to actual foes but to possible ones, not to the threat of civilized warfare but to that of torture and murder by foes that kept no faith with the vanquished and that spared neither men nor women nor babes at the breast. "Surrender! If I have to attack I will not be able to restrain the fury of the Indians," was in substance the message that brought about Hicks's capitulation at Mackinaw, Heald's massacre at Fort Dearborn, and Hull's shameful surrender at Detroit. Hull was old, his communications were broken, he was surrounded by savages in unknown numbers, and the threat of massacre terrified him. So he yielded.

It was cowardly, of course, and unnecessary, too.

The later history of the war and the history of all later Indian wars proved conclusively that no force of savages, even when backed by white men, could capture a fortified place if bravely defended. Even the little fort on the Sandusky, whose evacuation was later ordered because to defend it seemed impossible, was successfully held by a tiny garrison commanded by a real man against all the combined forces of the British General Proctor and of Tecumseh. The British victories in the west early in the war were won not by fighting but by diplomacy—by “bluff,” to use the vernacular of a later day.

Metea had paused and glanced about the room, awaiting a reply. It did not come and he went on, his glance lingering on Alagwa.

“Peter Bondie has ever been the friend of the red men,” he resumed. “He has taken a squaw from the Miami tribe. Metea is his friend. Metea is also the friend of Alagwa, the foster child of Tecumseh. Therefore he comes to warn him and her. His peoples’ tomahawks are up. The chief Winnemac leads them. Already they have slain the white men in the west. In two days they will be here. Their tomahawks will fall on the white men, and when they fall they will spare not. Therefore, let my brother and all that is his betake themselves to the south. All this land once belonged to the red men and it will belong to them again. No white man, brother though he be to the Indian, shall live

in it. Let my brother take warning and begone; and"—he turned to Alagwa—"let my sister prepare to go to Yondotia. Such is the will of Tecumseh."

The Bondies looked at each other; then they looked at Alagwa. The imminent loss of all that they had accumulated was a shock, but Metea's words to Alagwa struck them dumb. Fantine, knowing what she did about the girl, had suspected that the tie between her and Tecumseh had not been entirely broken, but Peter was ignorant even of her sex, and its revelation took his breath away. Neither he nor Fantine guessed the purpose for which Alagwa had come into the American lines, nor in any case would they have greatly reprobated it, for their associations and sympathies were largely with the Indians. But the order to her to join Tecumseh was a bolt out of a clear sky. Curiously, questioningly, the two stared at her.

Alagwa, however, was not thinking of herself, but of Jack. His words that afternoon had cut her to the heart. But they had not freed her from her obligation to serve him. She loved him and with her to love was to give all, without question of return. Not even at the command of Tecumseh, would she leave him. Yet she could not defy the will of the great chief. She must gain time to think and to plan.

She looked up and saw Metea's eyes fixed on her.

"At dawn tomorrow my sister will be ready," he said.

At dawn! Alagwa's heart stood still. She would have time neither to think nor to plan. Desperately she cast about for some respite, however brief. "At dawn!" she echoed. "Why need I go so soon? Why need I go at all. Will not Tecumseh and the redcoats come here? It is only the Pottawatomies who will attack the fort?"

Metea paused a moment before replying. "The Pottawatomies are brave," he said. "They will surround the fort, cutting off all help from the south. If a chance offers they will capture it. If not, they will wait. In one moon their redcoat brothers will come with the big guns to batter down the walls. But my sister may not wait for them. Tecumseh commands her presence now and she must go. She will have fitting escort. Twenty of my men wait to attend her."

Alagwa's hope vanished. No way could she see out of the coil that bound her. "Did Tecumseh send no word about the young white chief?" she faltered, desperately.

Metea shrugged his shoulders. "The young white chief?" he echoed. "He who slew the Shawnee braves at Defiance? No, Tecumseh sent no word! Let the young chief stay where he is. Soon we will test his courage at the stake and see if he is a brave man or a coward." Metea threw

his blanket about his shoulders and turned to the door. Then he looked back. "At dawn!" he repeated. "Let my sister be ready." He strode through the opening and disappeared.

Alagwa sprang to her feet. Her eyes flashed, her nostrils dilated, her lips curled back as they had curled when she faced Brito. "You shall not," she shrieked to the empty door. "You shall not. Dog of a Pottawatomie, little do you know Alagwa. I will not leave him and he shall not die. I will save him yet."

Peter Bondie looked at the girl contemptuously. "So!" he sneered. "You will not leave him, hein? You will save him, hein? And how will you save him? Bah! It is squaw's talk."

"Silence, cochon!" Fantine had risen swiftly to her feet. Her vast bulk quivered. "Fear not, ma bebée," she cried. "We shall save him! He is a fool and blind, but some day le bon Dieu will open his eyes. Till then Fantine will protect and save him and you." She caught the half-fainting girl in her arms, and turned upon her brother. "Scelerat!" she cried. "Know you to whom you speak? Know you that you address the daughter of M. Delaroche, the niece of the Count of Telfair, your liege lady? Down upon your knees, pig, and beg forgiveness.

Peter did not drop upon his knees—he had been

in America too long—but he changed color and began to mutter hasty apologies.

Alagwa scarcely heard him. Confused as leaves driven before October's blasts her thoughts fluttered. Possibility after possibility rose in her mind only to be swiftly discarded. Her efforts to gain time had failed. Metea would come for her at dawn. No doubt his men were watching. She and Jack might flee that very night—But no! Jack would not go without explanation. Even if he did go, his flight and hers would be discovered in the morning and they would be pursued and Jack would be killed. He could not withstand twenty men. And he must not be excited. Besides, he would not go. Well she knew it. Could she persuade him to take refuge in the fort? Not without an explanation, certainly! And the fort would soon be attacked. She herself had made that certain. It was her message to Tecumseh that had caused the British to send their red allies to beleaguer it and cut off all help and ammunition. Truly her deeds had found her out.

What could she do? What *could* she do? Inconsistently her thoughts beat upon the question. And presently the answer came.

Jack must be saved. He could be saved only by saving the fort. Therefore the fort must be saved. It could not be saved unless its garrison was warned. Therefore it must be warned.

To warn it was to be treacherous to Tecumseh and to her friends. It was to dig a deathtrap in the path which she had called them to tread. It was to set back, perhaps forever, the day on which her people would regain their ancient power.

Alagwa knew it. To the last detail she knew it. And she did not care.

Jack should not die! Rather let every Shawnee die! Rather let Tecumseh himself perish! Rather let the whole Indian nation pass away forever! Metea's threat had done its work well, but its effect had been far different from that which he had intended.

She sprang to her feet. "Come," she said. "Let us go."

Bondie stared at her with his little black eyes. "Go where, madame?" he questioned, respectfully but wonderingly.

"To Major Stickney. We must warn him. The fort must be saved."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE August night was close and still as Alagwa and Peter Bondie stole out of the hotel to make their way to Major Stickney's. The moon had not yet risen but the great stars that blazed across the immeasurable vault of the sky diffused almost as great a light. Fire-flies sparkled and pale-winged moths, white blots amid the shadows, fluttered over the dried grass and dusty trails that crossed the prairie. The hum of mosquitoes and the ceaseless rune of locusts filled the air. In the distance the unruffled waters of the Maumee reflected the stars and the blue-black interstices of the sky.

Neither Alagwa nor Bondie, however, was thinking of the beauty of the night. Carefully they stole along, moving like dark shadows, every nerve tense, every faculty of body and mind concentrated, watching every bush lest it might hide some of the savages of whom Metea had spoken. Foot by foot they crept along, using every artifice that years upon the frontier had taught to Bondie and that life among the Shawnees had taught to Alagwa.

Nothing happened, however. Either Metea had lied about his men or else had not thought it worth while to set a guard on the hotel, well know-

ing that escape was hopeless and not dreaming that either Bondie or Alagwa would take the extreme step of warning the fort.

Beside the walls of the fort, close to the ford across the shrunken waters of the Maumee, stood the United States factory. At one side of it, beneath a tree, Captain Wells's Miami wife and his three children were laughing softly, not knowing that far to the west their husband and father was lying dead amid a ring of blood-stained bodies. In front of the door itself Major Stickney was sitting, striving to get a breath of fresh air to cool the fever that racked his body.

When he saw Alagwa and Bondie his face lighted up. "Come and sit down," he called, eagerly, scrambling to his feet. "Is it hot enough for you?"

Neither visitor answered the question. Alagwa glanced at Bondie, and the Frenchman stepped closer. "Captain Wells is kill," he whispered. "Captain Heald and all the garrison at Fort Dearborn are kill. Winnemac and his Pottawatomies have kill them. Perhaps some are prisoners, but I think it not."

Stickney's fever-flushed face suddenly paled. "Good God!" he cried. Then with sudden recollection he gestured toward the woman and children beneath the tree. "Careful! Careful!" he begged,

tense and low. Then again: "Good God! it can't be true. Are you sure?"

Bondie nodded. "It is true. The news have just come. Tomorrow Otucka, who lead the Miamis who went with Captain Wells, will take the news to the fort. But that is not all. There is worse to come."

Stickney caught at the log wall of the building before which he stood. "Worse?" he echoed. "Worse? What worse can there be?"

Bondie shook his head. "There is much worse," he said. "General Hull have play the coward. He have surrender Detroit and all his men."

Stickney stared. Then an expression of relief came over his face and he laughed. "Oh! Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "That's foolishness. Hull surrender! I guess not. Captain Wells and the Fort Dearborn garrison might be cut off, but Hull couldn't surrender. If the same man told you about Wells, perhaps he's safe too. Of course you did right to bring me the news and I'm grateful. But it's all foolishness—just a rumor. Tomorrow we'll laugh at it."

"It is no rumor. It is all true. Tomorrow it will be confirm. And even yet that is not all." Bondie spoke gravely, apparently minding not at all Mr. Stickney's disbelief in his news. "It was Metea who bring the news from Detroit. It was Winnemac and the Pottawatomies who have kill

Captain Wells. Now Winnemac comes to this place with his warriors. Some are here now. In two days the rest will be here. They will attack the fort. In a month the British will come with the big guns to help them. It is true, Monsieur, all true! Sacre nom! Am I one to tell lies? It is all true."

Stickney dropped weakly into his chair. Bondie's earnestness and the confirmation which Alagwa's silence lent had its weight with him. Almost he believed. Shuddering, half from horror and half from illness, he lay silent for a moment.

Then he raised his head. "Have you told Lieutenant Hibbs?" he asked.

Bondie shrugged his shoulders. "Lieutenant Hibbs is a fool," he said, not angrily, but as one who states a well-known fact. "He speaks with a loud voice, cursing everyone. He will not believe me, no matter what I say. So I come to you."

Stickney got up. "We must go to him at once," he said. "Come." He started down the path toward the fort, then paused and hesitated, glancing at the woman and children beneath the tree. Then he went on. "Poor woman," he murmured. "Let her be happy a little longer."

At the gate of the fort the three were compelled to wait while a messenger went to notify Mr. Hibbs that Major Stickney wished to see him on a matter of grave importance. Plainly the captain was not anxious to receive visitors, for it was long

before the messenger came back, bringing grudging permission for the three to enter. "The lieutenant's in the messhall," he said, carelessly. "He'll see you there!"

The messhall was a log cabin, long and low, that paralleled the southern wall of the fort. As the three approached it their ears were saluted with loud laughter and clinking of glasses. Clearly, it was the scene of high revelry.

Inside, at the head of the table, sat Lieutenant Hibbs, goblet in hand, flanked by Williams, murderer of Wilwiloway and half a dozen others, all traders or petty officers. Half a dozen smoky tallow dips threw a flaring light on the flushed faces of the revellers, but did not dispel the dim shadows that crept about the walls.

Hibbs glanced at Stickney with a flicker of irritation in his eyes. He made no attempt to rise, nor did he invite his visitors to sit down.

"What the devil's the matter, Stickney?" he growled. "What do you want here at this time of the night. Can't you let a man have a minute to himself?"

Stickney's face was grim. "I have just received very serious news," he said; "and I have brought it to you. It is very serious—more serious than I can say."

Hibbs glared at Stickney; then he glanced at Alagwa and his eyes grew scornful. "News!" he

growled. "I suppose you got it from that worthless scamp"—he gestured at Bondie—"and from that d—d Indian-bred cub. To h—l with such news. I wouldn't believe such dogs on oath."

"You've got to believe them this time. I doubted the news myself at first, but now I am convinced that it is true. Send away your boon companions and listen."

Captain Hibbs threw himself back in his chair. In the flickering candle light his blotched features writhed and twisted. "I haven't any secrets from my friends," he growled. "Spit out your news, or get out of here yourself. Likely it's some cock and bull story."

Stickney shrugged his shoulders. After all, why should he care who heard what he had to say? The news could not be suppressed. On the morrow it would be known to all, and it might as well be told at once. With a tense energy, born perhaps of the ague that was racking his body and of the weakness that he realized was fast overcoming him, he spoke.

"Spit it out?" he echoed. "By God! I will spit it out! Do you know that while you are revelling here the Pottawatomies are dancing over the dead bodies of Captain Wells, Captain Heald, and all the men, women, and children who were at Fort Dearborn? Do you know that General Hull has surrendered Detroit and twenty-five hundred

men to the British? Do you know that in two days this fort will be surrounded by redskins and all communication between it and the outside world will be cut off. Do you know that the British are preparing to bring cannon up the Maumee to batter down your walls? Do you know this, Lieutenant Hibbs, you to whose care this fort and the honor of the country have been committed?"

Stickney staggered and clutched at the edge of the table for support. His strength was failing him.

But his work was done. As he spoke the jeers of his auditors died away and silence fell. Alagwa, watching, could see the drink dying out of the faces of the listeners.

Suddenly Mr. Hibbs staggered to his feet. His atramentous face had grown pale; his nostrils twitched; his chin sagged. "It's a lie!" he blustered; "a lie cooked up by yonder dog and by that half-breed cub. It's a lie."

Stickney's fever had come upon him and he was shaking in its grip. "It's no lie," he gasped. "It's the truth! And there's no time to lose. Preparations must be made this very night to send away the women and children, and to make the fort ready for a siege."

Hibbs's eyes widened. "Tonight?" he gasped. "You're mad, Stickney, mad." His voice came

clearer. The news had well-nigh sobered him. "If this news is confirmed——"

"Confirm it now. Send men to the Miami village across the river and see what word they bring back. Don't lose a moment. But let them be careful. Twenty Pottawatomies are here already and others are coming. Your scouts may be cut off. And hurry, hurry, hurry! Tonight you can do many things that will be impossible tomorrow. For God's sake, Mr. Hibbs! For God's sake——" Stickney's voice failed him, and he staggered. Alagwa pushed a stool forward and he sank upon it and leaned forward upon the table, panting.

Mr. Hibbs was recovering himself. He glanced at the faces of his boon companions and saw that Stickney's words had carried conviction. The necessity of asserting himself came strong upon him. "Damnation!" he roared, drawing himself up. "I know my duty and I'll attend to it without advice from you or anybody else. But I won't be stampeded. I'll send out and inquire among the Miamis. When I get confirmation I'll act. But I'm not going to act on the say-so of two worthless half-Injun curs and of a greenhorn out of his head with fever. Now get out and take that scum with you." He jerked his head at Peter and Alagwa.

The listeners nodded. There was sense in the captain's decision. After all, the reports might not be true. Stickney believed them, but he was an

ill man, fever racked, likely to see things deceptively. It would be folly to break up existing conditions on his single word.

Alagwa had not opened her mouth. Silently she had waited and listened. She herself was so sure of the truth of the tale that she and Bondie had brought that she had not doubted that it would bring conviction to others. And now Mr. Hibbs refused to believe it or to act upon it without delay.

And delay would be fatal to herself and perhaps to Jack. Metea would come for her at dawn. Before then she must make sure of Jack's safety. Despairingly she looked to Stickney for help, only to find him half-unconscious, shaking with fever. Clearly he was incapable of doing more. If she was to gain immediate refuge she must gain it by her own efforts.

She looked at the captain and fury swelled in her bosom. Alagwa hated and loved with equal intensity, and she had hated Hibbs since the day she first saw him—the day he had scoffed at Jack. Now
—now—

Recklessly she sprang forward and thumped with her clenched fist upon the table. The subservience to authority ingrained in her as in every Indian woman had vanished. Her white blood was in the ascendancy.

“Listen!” she flamed. “Listen while I speak. I bring you news that the tomahawks are up against

you. In return you call me scum. It is well. I want not your good will. Think you I bring you news because I love you? Not so! I hate you! I hate you all, dogs and murderers that you are. Gladly would I see you all at the stake. My heart is not white, it is red. Why, then, do I warn you? I warn you because my friend, Jack Telfair, one of your own blood, one of a family high in the councils of the great white father at Washington—because he is ill and unprotected. I ask not your help for myself. I ask it for him and for Peter Bondie and his sister, who at my bidding took their lives in their hands to bring you warning. Metea and the Pottawatomies keep watch upon us. At dawn they will come. Are we to be murdered because we warn you?"

Hibbs glared at the girl. But he was plainly uneasy. He had forgotten about Jack. Now he remembered. He remembered, too, that information had come to him lately that the young fellow's family was of importance. Still he blustered. "Hear the young cockerel crow!" he jeered. "What's this Metea fellow coming to you at dawn for?"

Alagwa colored. She had forgotten her anomalous position.

As she hesitated Williams burst in. "What's he coming for?" he jeered. "What you reckon he's coming for? These Injun-bred cubs are always

snakes in the grass. I'll bet this boy's been playing spy for the Britishers and the Shawnees ever since he's been here."

Alagwa gasped. Williams had hit upon the truth. That he did not know that he had hit upon it made his words little less appalling to the girl. After all she was only a girl, a child in years, trying desperately hard to play the man. Stickney was ill and Bondie incapable. She was practically alone against a dozen men. The fury that had sustained her went out of her, and she shrank back.

Williams saw her terror and jeered at her. "What'd I tell you," he cried. "The cub's a liar and a spy. He ought to be shot, d— him!"

For a moment more the girl faced the mocking men. Her lips quivered; her breast heaved. Desperately she fought for self control. Then all at once she gave way. Across her face she flung her arm, and bent forward, her whole body shaking with wild hysterical sobs.

Instantly Williams sprang forward, crying out in evil triumph. "I knowed it!" he yelled. "I knowed it. Look at him. Look at his figger. He ain't no boy. He's a girl. I'd a guessed it long ago, but she was so d— slim and straight. But she's been a-growing and developing. Look at her now. She's a girl, a girl, a girl, an' she's been travelling around with that Jack Telfair. The hussy! The baggage!"

Like molten lead Williams's words fell on the girl's consciousness. She attempted no denial; denial would be useless. Blindly she turned toward the door. As she did so it opened and three figures pushed through it. One, a huge woman, caught her in her arms. The other sprang past her. The sound of a blow—a clear, clean blow—came to her ears, followed by the crash of benches and table. Then Jack's voice rose, chill with death.

"Gentlemen," he said. "I learned for the first time a few minutes ago that this lady was not a boy. Within the hour, if she will do me the honor to accept me, she will be my wife. In any event, you will remember that henceforth her honor is mine and you will address her accordingly."

CHAPTER XIX

THE doubts and fears of the past weeks and the terror of the moment alike dropped from Alagwa, giving place to measureless peace and rest. Jack was well and strong again; his voice had rung out as no sick man's could ring. He had come to her aid. He would stand by her. She was glad, glad, that he knew her secret. She was so tired of playing the man. Closer she buried her head on Fantine's ample bosom and let her happy tears stream down.

Fantine did not speak. She stroked the girl's dark hair and patted her comfortingly on the back. But her eyes ranged forward, watching for what was to come.

Those in the room were divided into two parties, facing each other. On one side, close to the overturned table, stood Hibbs and his company, hands on pistols, waiting. Beside them Williams was climbing to his feet from the floor to which Jack's blow had hurled him. Facing them stood Jack with blazing eyes, grasping a long pistol, blue-barrelled, deadly. Behind him Fantine held Alagwa in her arms. Over her shoulder Cato and Rogers peered, grimly waiting. Between the two parties sat Stickney, looking with plaintive, fever-filled eyes for the

table so suddenly wrenched from beneath his hands.

For a little the picture held. Then Alagwa remembered that Jack was facing foes. Perhaps——

She whirled around, tearing herself from the French woman's arms, and sprang to his side, dropping her hand to the hunting knife at her belt. She spoke no word, but her glittering eyes were eloquent. They bored into those of Lieutenant Hibbs.

Perhaps Hibbs had no taste for a struggle. Perhaps he merely realized that he had gone too far. Whatever his reasons, he let go his pistol butt and laughed hoarsely.

“Have it your own way,” he scoffed, facing Jack with an assumption of scorn. “This is a free country. Marry whom you d— please. But if you want to marry this boy—Humph! this—er—lady—you’ve got to do it quick. If she isn’t your wife in an hour she goes out of this fort for good and all. You’re white, and I’ll trust you to keep your wife straight. But I’ll be d—d if I’ll trust any Indian-bred girl that lives. I’ll give you an hour to send for Father Francisco and get tied up. Understand! An hour! Not a minute more.”

Major Stickney rose totteringly to his feet. “But—but—but—” he chattered, protestingly.

“Sit down!” Hibbs roared at him. “You’ve been preaching a h—l of a lot about duty. All right! I’m doing my duty now. And part of it is

to drive out of this fort anybody that wants to see me and my men burned at the stake. As for you"—he whirled on Peter Bondie—"if you and your sister are afraid you can stay here." He strode to the door then paused on the threshold. "Remember! One hour!" he rasped, and tramped out of the room, followed by his friends. A moment later the shrilling of a bugle called the garrison to arms.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "That's all right," he sighed, smiling at Alagwa. "You poor girl! What a little heroine you are. You were a wonder as a boy, but as a girl—Good Heavens! How blind I've been. I might have known that no boy could or would have done all that you have done. Well, we haven't much time—" He caught sight of Alagwa's face and broke off. "What's the matter—er—Bob?" he asked, gently.

Alagwa raised her face to his. In her eyes burned a light that Jack had never seen before—the light of renunciation. "The road is watched," she said. "Metea and his braves watch it. If we evade them and pass unseen, they will come to the Maison Bondie at dawn, and if they find us gone they will pursue. We can not escape them. Therefore you must stay here, in the fort. I will go—"

"You?" Jack stared. Then he laughed. "You? My little comrade? My little—Bob? I wasn't just talking a moment ago. I will be very proud and

happy if you will be my wife. We've been jolly good friends, and we'll keep on—with a difference. You will marry me, won't you—dear?" He brought out the last word with a gulp.

Slowly Alagwa shook her head. "No!" she breathed.

Jack's face showed surprise, perhaps disappointment, not to say dismay. He stared at the girl and hesitated. Then he looked at his watch. "Ten minutes of our hour is gone," he said. "Bob, dear! you must marry me! I'll tell you why in a moment. But first"—he turned to Rogers—"Rogers, go and get Father Francisco and bring him here. I'm not of his church, but I suppose he won't object on that score."

Rogers nodded and started for the door, but stopped as Alagwa raised her hand.

"Do not go," she breathed. "It—is useless."

Rogers hesitated, but Jack stepped over to him and spoke to him, and with a nod of comprehension he went out.

Meanwhile Fantine had slipped to Alagwa's side. "Men are all fools," she whispered, hurriedly. "They know not what they want. M. Jack spoke today according to his kind. He thought of no girl in particular. He only had fancies. Be not a fool and say him nay."

Alagwa clutched the French woman's arm. "Why did you tell him?" she wailed.

"I told him nothing till he guess for himself. Parbleu! It was time!"

"He guessed? Guessed that I am Estelle Telfair——"

"Non! Non! He knows not that! He knows only that you are a girl and that—Hush! He comes. I must go." With a nod to Jack, the French woman swept from the room, sweeping Cato before her.

Jack watched her go; then he went to Alagwa's side and took her hands. "Little comrade," he said, gently. "You really *must* marry me."

"I can not." The girl spoke so low that Jack could scarcely hear her.

"Why not?" he asked. "You don't hate me, do you?"

Alagwa's hands tightened in his. "Oh! No! No!" she breathed. "Not that! Not that!"

"Then why——"

The girl raised her eyes. She was very young. But it was the day of young marriages. The stress of life brought early maturity and Alagwa was older far than her years. "Do you love me?" she asked, gravely.

Jack colored. Then he opened his mouth to begin the ready masculine lie.

But before he could utter it Alagwa cut him short. "Do not answer!" she said, sadly but firmly. "I know you do not. You like me as a

comrade—a jolly good comrade—not as a wife. Soon you go back home and you find the sweet, gentle lady of whom you speak today—or some other like her. You have no place in your life for the brown wood-girl. For the wood-boy you have a place, perhaps, but not for the wood-girl. I know it. And I can not marry you!"

"That's nonsense," Jack spoke irritably. He had offered to marry the girl because he thought she cared for him, because he felt that he owed it to her, and because he felt his honor was involved. He had not yet had time to think of her as anything but a boy—a comrade. Scarcely had he realized that she was a woman. But the moment she refused him, his desires began to mount. Jack was a real man and resembled most of his sex.

"That's nonsense!" he repeated. "There isn't any 'sweet, gentle lady.' There was one, I admit. But she—she was older than I, and she's engaged and probably married and—Oh! I've forgotten her long ago. I'm awfully fond of you and—"

"And I was fond of Wilwiloway—the chief that Williams murdered so cruelly. The council of women say that he might take me to his wigwam. But he say no; he want me not unless I love him. Shall I be less brave than he? I did not love him and—and—you do not love me. So—so—"

"But I do love you!" For the moment Jack

thought he did. "I do love you," he insisted, eagerly. "Haven't I told you often how glad I was that I found you? Hadn't I planned to take you to Alabama with me? Haven't I sworn dozens of times that you were the jolliest little friend I ever had? Doesn't that show that I love you? I couldn't say more—thinking you were a boy! Come, be reasonable! The priest will be here in a minute. Say you'll marry me?"

Jack was speaking well. His arguments were unanswerable. His tones were fervid. His wishes were unmistakable. But his words did not carry conviction. He saw it and changed his arguments.

"You really must marry me, little comrade!" he pleaded. "Don't you see you must. You—You've been with me for more than a month and—and—You remember what I said to you while we were riding down the Maumee—about a girl getting talked about if she—I said if the man didn't marry her he ought to be shot. You remember? You won't put me in such a position? Oh! You really must marry me!"

But the girl shook her head. "No!" she said, firmly. "No!" She held out her hand. "Good-by!" she said.

"Good-by?" Jack's mouth fell open. "What do you mean?"

Alagwa's pale lips curved into a smile. "Has the white chief forgotten?" she asked. "The hour

is almost done and I must go from the fort. And you must stay."

"Stay? I stay and you—Good Lord! My dear young woman, understand once for all that when you go out of this fort I go too. Either you marry me and stay, or we both go. That's flat."

Alagwa paled. "But you can not go with me," she cried. "I—I will not marry you, and if you travel with me now it—it would compromise me."

"Piffle!" Jack shrugged his shoulders, utterly heedless of his change of attitude. "If you go, I go too."

"But—but it is death. Indeed, indeed, it is death."

"All right!" Jack saw his advantage and pressed it hard. "All right, death it is, then."

Alagwa's eyes filled with tears. Desperately she wrung her hands. "Oh! You are a coward! A coward to treat me so," she sobbed.

"All right. I'm a coward." Jack made the admission cheerfully. "But I'm going with you—unless you marry me and stay here."

The door swung open, letting in the night. The parade ground was aglow. Men with lanterns came and went. Wagons were being hurriedly piled with luggage. Double lines of sentries guarded the walls. Evidently Lieutenant Hibbs had obtained confirmation enough to alarm him and was preparing for the worst.

As Jack glanced through the doorway Rogers entered, ushering in a man who could be no one except Father Francisco. Behind trooped Fantine and Cato, and back of them came Captain Hibbs, with Williams at his heels.

For a moment the captain glowered at the scene. "Tie them up, Father," he rasped. "The hour's nearly gone, and, by God, I'll keep my word."

Jack turned to the girl. "Which is it to be, little comrade," he asked.

With a sudden gesture of surrender the girl faced him. "Swear you will never regret—never regret—never regret—" Her voice trailed away.

"Regret? Of course not. Come, Father! We're ready."

Father Francisco did his office promptly. Probably never before had he married a man and a girl in boy's clothes, but he asked no questions, either as to that or as to the creeds of the strangely mated pair before him. Creeds were for civilization and all it connoted, and Father Francisco had been too long on the frontier to refuse his offices to any who asked them. He tied Jack and Alagwa hard and fast, delivered himself of a brisk and kindly little homily, blessed them, pocketed the fee that Jack slipped into his hand, and went quietly away to his duties.

A buzz of congratulations followed. Fantine wept over Alagwa's curly head. "Tell him who you are,"

she whispered. "Tell him who you are." Then came Cato, who bowed over her hand and called her "Mist'ess." Last came Rogers.

"I'm mighty glad," said the old man. "I always said you was a durned nice boy and I calculate you'll make a durned nice girl. I just want to warn you about talking too much, but I guess it ain't really necessary. You ain't always breaking in on them that's older than you and trying to air your opinions. Most folks keeps a-talkin' and a-talkin', but you're right quiet, and that's a mighty good start toward a happy home. I reckon you'll do, even if you was brought up with the Injuns. I got something for you. Leastways it's for Jack, and I reckon it's all the same now."

The old man dug a letter out of his pocket. "Here's that epistle I was tellin' Jack about this afternoon," he went on. "It come half an hour ago, while you two was a-talkin', and I got it and kept it till you was through. It's from Alabam', and I reckon it's from Jack's folks. I reckon you'd like to hand it to him. Any way, I got to go now. Give it to him when you like. I guess there ain't anything in it that won't keep for a while."

Alagwa took the letter. But Rogers was wrong in thinking that she was glad to give it to Jack. Though proficient in the Indians' picture writing, she knew nothing of the white men's lettering and she held it in awe. Almost sooner would she have

touched a snake. As quickly as possible she handed it to Jack; then stood back and watched him as he broke the seal.

As he began to read, something—perhaps it was Alagwa's strained attention—drew the eyes of the group upon him. Abruptly all grew silent, as if something portentous was in the air.

Jack smiled as he read. Clearly the news was good. Then suddenly his expression changed. A look of terror swept across his face. He flung up his hands, reeled, and cried out. Then before even Alagwa could reach him he toppled to the floor.

Instantly Alagwa was on her knees beside him. "Jack! Jack!" she wailed. "Jack! Jack!"

Williams glowered at the pair in evil joy. Then he stooped and picked the letter from the floor, to which it had fluttered from Jack's loosened fingers. For a moment he scanned it; then he looked up. "I reckon this is what knocked him," he jeered. "This here letter says: 'The girl you was sweet on ain't married. She's done broke her engagement and she wants you to come back to her.' An' here he's done gone and tied up with a half-breed Injun cub. Ha! Ha!"

Alagwa's face grew white. What was lacking in the letter her mind supplied. Her brain reeled. Williams's jeering laughter grew faint, coming from an immeasurable distance; the candles spun round her in enormous zigzags, the floor beneath her

swayed. Blindly she stared, all her being concentrated in one great determination not to faint.

Then she felt Fantine's arms about her. Slowly self control came back to her, and she raised her head. "Help me to get my husband to bed," she commanded.

Two hours later Alagwa, dressed for the road, stood looking down upon Jack's unconscious form. Her eyes were dry but her face betrayed the ache that tore her heart.

She was not uneasy about Jack. The surgeon had seen him and had declared that his set-back could be no more than temporary. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "What would you have? From all accounts the boy's been under stress enough tonight to prostrate a well man. He's blamed lucky to get off as easy as he probably has. Take better care of him in the future, madame!"

Alagwa had listened silently. She knew that more than exertion had overcome Jack. Her mind was made up. Since Williams's revelation she had felt that she no longer had a place by her husband's side. She had saved his life in battle and had brought him safely back to his white companions. Since then she had saved his life again by the care she had taken of him. She had betrayed her friends in order that he might be safe. And she had reaped her bitter reward. She did not blame Jack. She

blamed herself. She ought never to have married him. His life was not hers. If for a moment she had thought it possible to go with him and live the white man's life in far Alabama the events of the night had blotted the idea from her mind. She had done all she could to save him. The fort, warned of the coming attack, would be able to hold out till help came from the south. She could do nothing more. Her part in his life was over. It remained only for her to take herself out of it.

She would join Metea and go with him to Tecumseh. After all, to go was no more than her duty. Tecumseh had called her and she must obey. She would go and confess to him that she had failed in her mission and that she had warned his enemies of his coming attack on the fort. She would tell him why she had failed, and she would accept whatever punishment he meted out to her. Almost she hoped that it might be that of the stake, so that she might expiate her fault by extremest suffering. Whatever it was, she would submit. Now that she knew that Jack's heart belonged to another, life held nothing for her. Yes! She would go to Tecumseh.

It did not occur to her that the great chief might not have sent for her—that Metea might have been bought by the gold of Brito Telfair.

Once more she looked at Jack. The smoky candle gave little light, but the moon, now riding in glori-

ous majesty across a cloudless sky, shone through the open window with a radiance almost like that of day. By its gleam Jack's boyish features stood out clear and distinct. Slowly she bowed her head; and with a sob, she kissed him on the lips. "Take care of him, Cato," she ordered, to the round-eyed negro who stood by. "Take care of him." Then, dry-eyed, mute, she passed to the square and across it to the gate of the fort.

The sentry made no attempt to stop her; he had no orders to stop those who wished to go out; and without a word she passed forth into the outer world.

CHAPTER XX

JACK'S relapse lasted longer than either the surgeon or Alagwa had anticipated. When the emotions of the day cumulated in the rush of blood that ruptured anew the delicate half-healed membranes of his brain August lay hot upon the land. When he once more looked out upon the world with sane eyes September was far advanced. The autumn rains had transformed the hot, dry prairie into a fresh green carpet starred with late blossoms that would persist until frost. The winds were tearing the ripened leaves from the branches and heaping them in windrows of scarlet and gold; the rustling of their fall whispered through the air. From unseen pools along the Maumee the ducks were rising.

Many things had happened while Jack lay unconscious. The siege of the fort had begun, had taken its toll of dead and wounded, and had ended with the arrival of General Harrison and the troops from Ohio and Kentucky. The Indians had fled down the Maumee to meet the advancing British and warn them that "Kentuck were coming as numerous as the trees." Harrison had destroyed the towns of the Miamis and Pottawatomies, had

turned the command over to General Winchester, and had left for Piqua. Winchester had marched down the Maumee and had built a new fort at the ruins of Fort Defiance. Fort Wayne itself was almost as it had been before the siege began, but the settlement around it had been burned to the ground.

In the three weeks that had elapsed Jack had not regained consciousness sufficiently to understand that Alagwa had left him. After he was better, Cato, fearing the effect of the news, kept it back until his master's insistence grew too great to be longer denied.

Jack received the information in bewildered silence. He could not understand it. Many of the happenings of that eventful evening had been blotted from his mind, but some of them remained fresh and clear. He remembered how the girl had fought against marrying him and how he had forced her to consent. But he remembered, too, that she *had* consented and had married him, irrevocably and forever. Why, then, should she leave him an hour later? And whither had she gone?

Vainly he questioned Cato. The negro had grown confused with anxiety, responsibility, and the lapse of time. "Deed I don't know whar she went, an' I don't know why she went, Mars' Jack," he pleaded, "'c'epin' it was somethin' in the letter dat poor white trash read out to her."

Jack turned his head slightly. "Letter?" he echoed. "What letter? And who read it?"

"Dat letter that Mars' Rogers brought you from home. I don't know who 'twas from but I reckons it was from ole marster. You was a-readin' it when you dropped, and dat man Williams picks it up, and he reads somethin' outer it, and Miss Bob's face gets white and her eyes sorter pops and her mouth trimbles. Then she straightens up and turns her back on Williams and says for me to help her get you to bed. Then, after a couple of hours, when you's restin' sorter easy an' the doctor done said you warn't a-goin' to be sick long she tells me she's gwine away. She didn't say whar she was gwine. She just went."

Jack had listened silently. He was still very weak. "What was it that Williams read?" he asked.

Cato fairly groaned with the effort to remember. "Seems like I can't exactly call it back, Mars' Jack," he confessed. "It was sumpin' about somebody wanting you back home, but who 'twas I dis-remembers."

"Well, where is the letter?"

Cato shook his head. "Deed I don't know, Mars' Jack," he answered. "I ain't seed it since. I looked for it the next day but I couldn't find it an' I ax Massa Rogers, but he say he don't know nothin' about it. I reckon it's done lost."

"Go and find Rogers and ask him to come here."

While the negro was gone Jack lay quivering with excitement. He could not even remember that he had received a letter, much less what it contained. Cato's words only added to his bewilderment. Naturally his people would want him at home, but he could not conceive how any statement to that effect could have troubled Alagwa, much less have caused her to leave him. The thought of Sally Habersham never once entered his mind.

Rogers came after a while, but he brought no enlightenment. The old hunter had left the room after giving the letter to Alagwa and had not been present when Jack fainted. He knew only that the letter was from the south, presumably from Jack's home. Nor did he know whither the girl had gone. He did not know that she had gone at all till nearly twenty-four hours after her departure, and then he with the others was shut up in the fort, unable to venture out. And long before the siege was over all record of her going had been blotted out.

Later, Major Stickney, recovered from his fever, came to see Jack, but he knew even less than Rogers.

Balked here, Jack swallowed his pride and inquired for Williams, only to learn that the trader had tramped away with General Winchester's army down the Maumee. He inquired for Fantine, but found that she and Peter had gone south with the women and civilians an hour after his seizure; Cato

thought she had gone before his "mist'ess" had. Even Mr. Hibbs had gone, having resigned from the army as the sole way of escaping court-martial on charges of drunkenness, cowardice, and incompetence. Every avenue of information seemed blocked.

Driven back upon himself Jack ate his heart out with vain questionings.

He did not distrust the girl. It did not even occur to him to question her conduct. What she had done she had done for some reason that had seemed good to her. He was sure of that. His little comrade had not lost her staunchness when she changed her seeming sex, nor when she became his wife.

His wife! The words thrilled him. Day by day his mind wandered back over the events of the weeks that had passed since he came to Ohio. Day by day the portrait he carried in his mind changed, Alagwa's boyish figure and boyish features melting slowly into the softer outlines of womanhood. Day by day he called back all that she had said and done until his heart glowed within him. How sweet she was! how dear! And how roughly he had used her, treating her as a mere boy instead of throning her as a queen. He ought to have guessed long before, he told himself. He ought to have known that no boy could be so gentle, so tender, so long-suffering. With shame he reconstructed the events of that last afternoon beneath the great tree when he

had spoken of the "sweet, gentle lady" whom he might some day wed and had laughed at the suggestion that he might mate with a wild-wood lass like his boy friend. How could he have spoken as he did? Sally Habersham had been in his mind, of course. But Sally Habersham—Sally Habersham was not fit to tie the shoe of his little comrade; she was a mere ghost flitting through the corridors of a shadowy half-forgotten world, a million miles removed from that in which he dwelt. Fantine was right. What a man needed—on the frontier or off it—was not a fair face and a knowledge of the mazes of the minuet, but a staunch comrade, one who would grow into one's life and would share the bitter and the sweet. Few men could win such a prize, and he—he had thought to do so carelessly, casually, by arguments that to his quickened consciousness seemed little better than insults. How had he ever dreamed that one so tender, so true, so loving, would accept his hand without his heart. She had called him a coward when he forced her to marry him. Well, he had been a coward; with shame he admitted it. No wonder she had fled from him. But he would find her and would tell her all the new-found love that welled in his heart. And she would believe him, for he would be speaking the truth.

But how was he to find her?

At last, when he was despairing, Father Francisco came to his aid.

"My son," said the priest. "I know not why your wife has left you——"

"I don't either." Jack wrung his hands. "They tell me that it was something in a letter—a letter I can not even remember receiving. But I don't believe it. I don't believe it! She loved me! I am sure she loved me. And she would not have left me willingly."

Keenly the priest looked into the lad's face. "Do you love her?" he asked gently.

Jack paled, but his eyes met the other's squarely. "By heaven, I do," he swore. "I did not know it. I married her for her honor's sake. But now—now—I love her! I love her! For me there is no other woman in all the world and never shall be."

"And never was?" asked the priest gently.

Jack colored. "I won't say that," he admitted. "I—I thought I was in love once. Good heavens! I didn't know what love was then." He laughed bitterly. "But I've found out now. Oh! Yes! I've found out now."

Father Francisco's eyes had never left the lad's face. But at the last words he nodded. "I believe you, my son," he said. "We men are poor creatures at best. I come to bring you a crumb of news—only a crumb, but still, news. Your wife did not go south. She went down the Maumee with

a party of Pottawatomies. I think she must have intended to go back to the Shawnees with whom she had lived so many years."

Jack clambered to his feet. "Down the Maumee?" he echoed. "I'll start after her at once."

But the priest shook his head. "No!" he said. "You must get well and strong first. If you start now you will kill yourself and you will not find your wife. She is in no danger. Wherever she went, she went of her own accord. She is perfectly safe. If you really want to find her you will control yourself and get well."

Jack set his teeth hard. The advice was good and he knew that he must follow it. But still he protested. "If you knew," he began,—

"I do know." The priest spoke gently. "Years ago I myself—But that is long past. Let it lie! You must not start for at least two weeks."

"All right." Jack spoke reluctantly. "And, thank you, Father!"

The priest rose. "No thanks are necessary," he said. "The church frowns on the separation of husbands and wives, and I only did my duty in telling you as soon as I knew."

Jack lay back on his couch rejoicing. The veil was still before his eyes, but it was no longer black. Light had dawned behind it. It would brighten, brighten, till—

When Rogers heard the news he nodded sagely. "I reckoned so all along," he asserted. "I reckoned she'd gone back to those Injun friends of hers. But I kinder hated to say so. Most Injun-bred youngsters does when they gets an excuse. Maybe that there letter gave her a jolt and——"

Jack sat up. "Williams is down the Maumee," he gritted. "If I find him——"

"Of course! Of course! But of course he'd lie. An' maybe there's an easier way. It'll take a week or two for you to get well enough to start. Whyn't you let me go to Piqua and find Peter Bondie an'——"

"Will you?" Jack was growing more and more excited. "When can you start?"

"Right away. I——"

"All right. Go! Go! Find Peter and tell him all that has happened. Ask him if he can give me any help, any clue, however small. He had friends near Fort Malden. He got news from these. Find out who they are. They may know something. Find out what it was that Williams read aloud—what it was that made my little comrade leave me. And"—Jack hesitated and flushed painfully—"see Colonel Johnson and find out whether he has heard anything of Miss Estelle, my cousin whom I came here to seek. Good God! When I think how I have failed——" The boy's voice died away.

Rogers looked at him queerly. "I been a-thinkin'

about that gal," he said. "I got an idea that——"

Jack interrupted. Jack had gotten used to interrupting Rogers, having found that that was the only way to get a word in when the old man held the floor. "Hurry back," he said. "No! Hold on! I won't wait for you to come back here. Cut across the Black Swamp and join me at Fort Defiance or wherever General Winchester and the army may be. I'll go there and wait for you."

The old hunter got up. "I sure will," he assented, with alacrity. "I'll start right away. I reckon, though, I'll get more from Madame Fantine than I will from Peter."

Jack's excitement lessened. A quizzical light came into his eyes. Rogers's liking for Fantine was no secret to him. "Maybe you will," he conceded. "Fantine is very kind hearted. It's a great pity"—meditatively—"that she talks so much."

A faint color tinged the old hunter's leathery cheeks. "Who? Her?" he mumbled. "She—she—Well? What in thunder do you expect a woman to do? Ain't a woman got a tongue? Why shouldn't she use it. What I hate is to hear men talking so much. Anybody that cooks like Madame Fantine sure has got a right to talk. But, all right. Laugh if you want to. I'll be right off and I'll join you as quick as the Lord'll let me." Allowing no chance for reply the old man hastened nimbly from the room.

After Rogers had gone the days passed slowly, while Jack gathered strength and made ready to be gone. His horses had vanished—commandeered for the use of the army—and no others were to be had. Winter, however, was at hand and he set himself to follow the custom of the country and to learn to use both skates and snowshoes.

Cato had learned also, at first with many protests, but later with mounting delight. "Lord, Mars' Jack," he said, one day. "I sutinly do wish Mandy could see me on these yere things. I lay she'd cook me the bestest dinner I ever seed."

Jack nodded. "I reckon she would, Cato!" he agreed. "But you want to be mighty careful. We're going a good many miles on the ice and if you fell and hit your head——"

"My head!" Cato looked bewildered. "Lord, Mars' Jack, if dat Injun couldn't hurt my head with that axe of his'n, how you figger out I gwine to hurt it on the ice?"

Jack grinned. "Of course you wouldn't hurt your head," he agreed. "But the ice isn't more than a foot thick and if you hit it with your head you'd probably knock a hole in it and we'd both go through and be drowned."

As Jack's skill in skating grew, his impatience to be gone increased, the more so as the seat of war, after centering for a time at Fort Defiance (where a new fort, Fort Winchester, had been built to de-

fend the frontier against the hordes of savages that hung along the frontier), had begun to move down the river. When Jack heard that General Winchester in command had boasted that he would take Fort Malden in thirty days he refused to delay longer.

When he started out January had come. Snow wrapped the earth and loaded the branches of the trees, clinging even to the sides of the mighty trunks that soared skyward. The road down the Maumee, well-travelled as it was, was hidden beneath drifts. Only the river itself was bare, swept clear by the icy wind.

Down it Jack and Cato sped, their skates ringing on the steel-cased coils of the winding pathway. For four days they travelled, passing Fort Defiance and Fort Deposit, and coming at last to the mouth of the river. A few hours more upon the ice along the shores of the lake brought them to the American camp at Frenchtown on the Raisin River.

Here Rogers was waiting them at the outposts. "I reckoned you'd be along soon," he said, "an' I been watching. I've got news that you'd ought to know quick. First place, Williams is here! No! I ain't seen him, but he's here. He's on outpost duty an' you can see him tonight if you want to. But I reckon you ain't got time to fool with the skunk now. I've got bigger news. I didn't see Madame Fantine; she'd gone to Cincinnati to get some goods

to restock their store that was burned. But I saw Peter. Neither of 'em knew that Miss Bob had left you. Peter didn't know nothin' about the letter. But he knew something else. And I saw Colonel Johnson and he knew something else, too. Who you reckon Miss Bob really is?"

Jack clutched the old man by the arm. An idea was dawning in his mind. "Who? Who?" he chattered. "Not—not——"

"She's the gal you was lookin' for—the gal that Tecumseh brought up. Alagwa means "the star," an' they tell me her right name, Estelle, means star, too. I dunno why she fooled you. Women is durned curious critters an'——"

The old man babbled on, but Jack did not hear him. The explanation of many things had rushed upon him. But the main fact stood overwhelming and clarifying out.

Bob was Alagwa, the girl of whom he was in search, the daughter of M. Delarache. And she was his wife. Once he knew the truth he could not understand why he had not guessed long before.

In truth, however, his dullness was not strange. No doubt, if he had known from the first that his little comrade was a girl he would have quickly guessed that she was the girl of whom he was in search. But so long as he thought her a boy he could not guess; and since he had known her sex his thoughts had been engrossed with other matters.

When his thoughts came back to earth, Rogers was still talking. "Peter was mighty sorry she'd left you," he said. "He reckoned she'd gone back to Tecumseh. And he says for you to see his friend, Jean Beaubien, at Frenchtown, and——"

"At Frenchtown? That's here!"

"Yes. An' I've seen Beaubien! He knows all about Miss Bob. She's living at Amherstburg, with white people. Tecumseh's having her taught things."

"At Amherstburg!" Jack gasped. "Why! that's at Fort Malden, only fifteen miles away, across the river!" He turned to Cato. "Cato," he directed, "you stay here with Rogers till I get back. If I don't come back——"

"Hold your horses!" The old hunter fairly shouted the words. "You ain't plumb crazy, are you. You can't go to Fort Malden 'less'n you want to lose your hair. There's seven thousand Indians there."

Jack set his teeth. "I'll go if there are seven thousand devils from h—l there," he gritted.

"Same thing!" assented Rogers, cheerfully. "All right! If you feel that way about it, I reckon I'll have to go along. But there ain't no use of being any crazier than we got to be. If we start at dark we'll git there just about the best time."

CHAPTER XXI

DUK was falling fast when the three friends, with ringing skates, fast bound, sped forth on their perilous errand. Before them stretched the vast expanse of the lake, steel-clad, reflecting and multiplying every spark of light that lingered in the firmament. Behind them, low down in the west, the pale ghost of the half-moon dipped swiftly toward the tinted clouds into which the sun had so recently plunged. All about hung a silvery haze, moonlight-born, an exhalation from the blue-black ice to the blue-black sky. Far in the north the nascent lights of an aurora flickered against the sky.

The three did not speak much. The wind that had swept the ice clear of snow made speech difficult, cutting the breath from their nostrils and whirling it away in transient wreaths of mist. Leaning forward, to shield their faces, the three pushed their mouths into the furs that circled their throats and drove doggedly forward into the north-east.

Jack, at least, was silent for other reasons. He was going to the place where Alagwa had lived. But would he find her there? Or would he find her gone—gone with the fleeing British and Indians?

He had reason to think that they had fled. Every soldier in the camp on the River Raisin was certain that they had. General Winchester, of whom he had sought permission to go beyond the lines, seemed sure of it.

Jack had found the general comfortably lodged a quarter of a mile from his troops, in the house of Francis Navarre, a resident of the place and a man with cultivated tastes and a well-stocked cellar. When Jack called, the general was at table with half a dozen other genial Frenchmen, who were laughing at his jests and listening to his stories with apparently absorbing interest. A politician before he had been a soldier, habituated to an easy, luxurious life from which he had been for many weeks cut off and subjected to privation and suffering, the general was expanding like a flower in the sunshine of his companions' flatteries.

He received Jack affably—affability was his forte—and listened to his story with interest.

“Certainly you may cross the lines, my dear sir,” he said, when Jack had made his request. “But I am afraid you won’t find your wife at Amherstburg. My good friend, Jaques La Salle here”—he nodded toward a smiling Frenchman across the table—“my good friend, Jaques La Salle, has information that Fort Malden has been destroyed and that the British and the Indians have all fled. In a day or two I expect to march up

and take possession. A glass of wine with you, sir."

Jack drank the wine in some bewilderment. He had not supposed that such easy success was near at hand. "When did they leave, may I ask, general?" he questioned, respectfully.

The general shook his head. "Frankly, I don't know exactly," he replied. "La Salle, when did your news say the British expected to leave?"

"This morning, general. They were packing up last night. Probably they have gone by now. Beyond a doubt they have gone if they heard of your intention to march upon them."

"Ha! Ha! Yes! They've gone, my dear Mr. Telfair. Still, they may have left a guard. Some scouts who came in this afternoon reported that they were getting ready to attack us tonight. All foolishness, of course! It shows how little faith one can put in rumors in war time. If you find out anything about their movements, let me know, Mr. Telfair. Good fortune to you sir."

Jack hurried away, wild to be gone. But Rogers was obdurate and perforce he waited till dusk. Meanwhile he talked with the soldiers.

All of them were elated with triumph, past and expected. Only two days before they had taken possession of the village, driving away the British and Indians who had garrisoned it, and they were delighted with their success. They had made no at-

tempt to fortify their position. Why should they? They were occupying the place only for a moment. The enemy was flying before them. In a day or two they would pursue them, would recapture Detroit, and wipe out the disgrace of Hull's surrender. That the foe might rally and attack them had not entered any one's head. The only man in all the camp who seemed in any way dubious as to the future was Francis Beaubien, whom Jack visited to get full information as to how Alagwa was housed, and even Beaubien confined his misgivings to a shake or two of the head. The reports of the scouts were received with jeers. Whom the gods destroy they first make mad.

Jack recalled it all as he sped eastward. He was torn two ways. For his country's sake he hoped that the enemy had fled. For his own sake he hoped that all of them had not fled or that Alagwa at least had been left behind. Once away from the optimism of the camp he found it hard to believe that foes so bitter and so often triumphant had fled without a blow.

At last the three reached the mouth of the short but broad Detroit River and turned up it from the lake. As they did so the moon set, leaving the great stars to arch in splendor across the cloudless sky. In the north the aurora still flickered, now shooting upward toward the spangled firmament, now dying

away to palest gold. In the white glare the frozen lake sparkled like a diamond.

Up the river the adventurers sped, until the Canadian shore, gleaming white with snow, rose silver edged against the sky. To the north, far away, points of yellow light glittered through the trees and from the top of the bluff.

Rogers jerked his hand toward them. "All them Britishers ain't gone yet," he snorted. "There's a right smart passel of 'em left, judgin' from those lights. I reckon we'd better land down here a ways."

Jack nodded and changed his course, heading sharply in to the shore half a mile down river from the camp and village. Half he expected to be saluted by a volley of musket balls or to be met by a horde of ambushed savages. Luckily, however, no enemy appeared.

Cautiously the three landed and moved northward along the river, following a road that led toward the village. When the lights were very near, Rogers and Cato drew aside to wait, and Jack went on alone.

Soon he found himself in the thick of the Indian village. No one challenged him or questioned him. Dozens of other men dressed exactly as he was were passing along the many paths trampled in the snow. No British were visible, and he guessed that they confined themselves to the limits of the fort, whose

dark bulk rose above the houses of the village. But Indians were everywhere. Seven thousand of them, many with women and children, had gathered there, absolutely swamping the small village that had once surrounded the fort. Dozens of French "habitans" wandered through the streets. Nowhere could Jack see the least sign of panic of which General Winchester had spoken so jubilantly.

The white settlement was small and Jack had no difficulty in picking out the house where Alagwa dwelt. It was larger and better built than most of those that stood near it. Lights shone through several of its windows.

Jack went up to the door, intending to ask flatly for Alagwa, hoping that the boldness of his demand might gain him admission to her presence. His knock, however, through twice repeated, brought no response. Hesitatingly he tried the door, and it opened easily, disclosing a dim hall with a brightly lighted sitting room opening from it on the left. For a moment he hesitated; then stepped inside. He had no time to lose; if Alagwa was in the house he must find her; if she was not in it he must search elsewhere.

The sitting room proved to be vacant, and a glance through the open door into the dining-room just behind it showed that this too was untenanted. But as Jack turned back toward the hall, intending to seek upstairs, he heard a rattling at the lock

of the outer door. Swiftly he glanced about him; then as swiftly he slipped back into the sitting room and hid behind the long heavy curtains that veiled the windows.

The next instant the door opened and a girl came in. At sight of her Jack's heart gave a sudden bound and then stood still.

It was Alagwa. And yet it was not she! Gone were the boyish garments that he had known so well, and with them had gone the slim boyish figure and the careless boyish carriage. The girl did not wear even the Indian costume that he had expected; from head to foot she was clothed in the garments of the whites.

And her face! Jack gasped as his eyes rose to it. The several features he knew—the dark splendid starry eyes, the clustering curls, the red lips, the olive cheeks in which the color came and went. They were all there, but with them was something else, an indefinable something that he had never seen before. Marvelling, he gazed, till doubt began to grow in his mind. Could this indeed be she—be his little comrade of the trails, she who had fought for him, she who had nursed him, she who had pledged herself to him for better or for worse? Could she have changed into this dazzling being, this maiden like and yet unlike the “sweet gentle ladies” he had known all his life, this being ador-

able from the tips of her tiny boots to the last riotous curl of her hair?

He was about to sweep the curtains aside and step forth when the half-closed door behind her was flung open and an officer in a red coat, with a long military cloak trailing from his shoulder, strode into the room.

At sight of him the girl threw back her shoulders. Her eyes flashed. Her cheeks flamed. "Captain Telfair!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here? Where are Mr. and Mrs. Winslow?"

Brito's eyes gleamed. He did not answer the questions. "At last," he breathed. "At last! I've got you at last. I told you I would get you sooner or later. And, by God, I have." His voice sank almost to a whisper.

Alagwa did not answer. Almost she seemed to have expected some such reply. Steadily she faced the man. Jack, behind her, could see the color pulsing in her cheek, just visible by the flaming lamps.

Greatly he longed to spring forward and take Brito by the throat. But he did not do so. He was in the heart of the enemy's camp; the least outcry would bring against him overwhelming odds and doom him to a shameful death. Until the very last moment he would wait.

"You nearly killed me once, you know, Estelle,"

the man went on, in the same hushed, almost wondering tones. "You fought me and you shot me. It was then I first learned to love you. We are a fierce race, we Telfairs, and we love fierce women. And you are fierce, Estelle, fierce as the wild Indians who brought you up. God!"—he laughed hoarsely—"to think that I—I, Brito Telfair, I who supped on the honey of women long before I became a man, I who have known courts and palaces and kings—to think that I should go mad over a wood-bred girl! But it's true, Estelle; it's true. You are my mate—hot and fierce and proud. You are mine and tonight at last I have you fast."

"Be not too sure!" Jack scarcely knew the girl's voice, so deep and resonant it had become and so well had she mastered the intricacies of the English tongue. "Be not too sure. You thought so twice before—once in the midst of Fort Defiance and once when Metea and his bribed dogs turned me over to you. But both times you were deceived."

Brito shrugged his shoulders. "You saved yourself the first time, my beauty," he said. "And I love you for it. Tecumseh saved you the second time and I hate him for it. Since then you have fought me off with your tale of a husband! a husband!" The man laughed savagely. "That game is played out. You have no husband! I have learned all the details at last. Marriage between a Catholic and a heretic who part ten minutes after

the ceremony is no marriage. It can be annulled and it will be annulled."

"It never shall be!"

"Ah! But it shall. Tomorrow you yourself will ask it. Tonight you are in my power—in my power, do you understand? I command at Fort Malden tonight. General Proctor and all my superiors have gone to crush those braggart Americans at Frenchtown. Tecumseh and his braves have gone with them. Winslow and his wife, they who have sheltered you here, are under arrest by my orders; they will be released with apologies tomorrow, but tonight they are fast and can not come to help you. You are mine—and tomorrow you will ask annulment."

Behind the curtains Jack stood tense and ready. The news that the British and Indians had marched against General Winchester appalled him. He knew what fearful havoc they would work if they could slip by night upon the confident sleeping troops.

What could he do? How warn his countrymen? He could not leave Alagwa in peril. Nay! He could not leave at all. The road to the River Raisin led through the room, past Brito and the Indians without. Could he pass them? He could not overpower Brito without a struggle. And a single out-cry would ruin all. He must wait—wait and watch. The game was not played out. Alagwa

was no child. She might save herself and make it possible for him to escape with her to the American camp. With hard-set jaws he waited.

Alagwa was speaking without tremor or fear. Scorn unutterable rang in her voice.

"It is a plot worthy of you and your race," she grated. "Dogs and liars that you are. Oh! I have found you out, all of you! For years you have cheated my people, deceived them, debauched them. For years you have fed them with lying promises to restore them to their ancient homes. You hated and despised them, but you wanted them for a bulwark against the Americans. You wanted them and you got them. You won them cheaply—by lies and by presents—presents for which they are paying now. They have borne the brunt of every battle in this war. They have won every victory for you. And you—you do not dream of keeping your promises. You—you personally—are like your lying race. You have killed, you have bribed, you have conspired, you have imprisoned those of your own race to win your way to this house, to get your grasp on the lands handed down to me by my forefathers. Tonight you purpose to betray the great chief who has gone away to fight your battles, trusting to your honor, leaving his women in your care. All my life long I have been taught to hate the Americans. All my life long I have been taught to look upon them as robbers

and as foes. But, after all, I was born beneath the American flag. I have married an American. I am an American. And I am proud of it! Yes! proud of it! I am proud of my husband and proud of the race that produced him. I hate their foes. I hate you. And, by the white man's God I swear, that your triumph—if you win it—shall be hollow, for you will clasp a dead woman in your arms. And tomorrow—tomorrow—Tecumseh will come back and burn you at the stake!"

Brito did not answer in words. Instead, he leaped swiftly forward, clutching at the girl with outstretched arms.

Had Alagwa been bred in civilization he must have caught her. But quickly as he leaped, eyes and muscles trained to avoid the rattlesnake striking from his lurking place in the grass were quicker. Alagwa dodged beneath his arms and darted into the dining-room, flinging the door backward behind her as she went.

Jack could wait no longer. As Alagwa vanished he sprang from behind the curtains and threw himself upon Brito. His fingers closed on the latter's long military cloak and he swung the Englishman round with a fury that tore the garment from his shoulders and sent him catapulting against the farther wall. Simultaneously the jar of a heavy door told that Alagwa had escaped from the house.

Cursing horribly, the Englishman sprang up,

plunging at Jack, sword out. But he halted and recoiled as he met the small dark unwinking stare of the American's pistol.

Jack's voice rang out, chill and metallic. "Silence!" he clinked. "If you raise your voice, you die."

Breathing hard, Brito faced the unexpected foe who had confronted him. Suddenly his eyes gleamed with recognition and his teeth flashed from behind his snarling lips. "You!" he gasped. "By God! You!"

Jack frowned. "Not so loud," he cautioned.

"Not so loud! By God! Hear the cockerel crow." A hoarse laugh rumbled from the speaker's lips. "You come in good time," he cried. "Yes! In good time. I shall not have to ask annulment now."

Jack did not answer. He was thinking what to do. He could not shoot the man down in cold blood! Besides, the noise of the shot would probably cost him his own life and would certainly bring his expedition to an untimely end. He had caught his enemy but he did not know what to do with him.

Brito laughed again. Clearly he understood the American's dilemma. "You whelp!" he rasped. "Do you think that popgun will save you?" he sneered. "Or do you think Estelle will come back to help you. She's the better man of the two. But she won't come back. She didn't even see you,

much less recognize you. I don't believe she knew that any one had come to her help. Probably she's gone for her Indians. If she comes back with them—Well! my friend, it'll be all up with you." Brito was recovering his poise.

Jack did not answer. He knew that if the Indians came it would indeed be all up with him. Swiftly his eyes quested the rooms. At last they rested on a bell rope that hung from the wall.

Instantly he swung back on Brito. "Drop that sword," he ordered.

Brito dropped it. He heard death in Jack's tones.

"Turn your back! Quick!" Brito turned it. He was no coward, but Jack's eyes brooked no denial. In them he read obedience or death.

As he turned Jack snatched at the bell cord that hung along the wall and tore it down. Somewhere in the house a furious jangling rose and slowly died away. As it died Jack looped the rope, coil after coil, about Brito's body. "Silence! Or you die!" he growled, and the Englishman's frantic but low-pitched curses died away. Swiftly he bound the man to a heavy chair and thrust a gag into his mouth. Then, throwing the long military cloak about his shoulders, and clapping the army cap upon his head, he turned without a word to the door.

His heart was heavy within him. He had set out

to tell Alagwa of his new-born love and to bring her back with him. He had won his way to her side, had seen her face, had heard her voice—had heard her declare that she was proud of him, her husband. If he could have had a moment's speech with her—a single moment's speech—he could have told her—told her—But it was not to be. Hidden in the mazes of the Indian camp she was for the moment beyond his reach.

Besides, he must hurry to warn the American camp. His heart burned hot as he thought of the fatuous fool who slept far from his men, who scoffed at warnings, who neglected the commonest precautions for defense. Swift as prudence would allow he sped through the Indian camp to where Rogers and Cato waited, and together the three raced southward and westward, hoping against hope that they would yet be in time, hoping till the far-off rattle of rifles rose and fell and died away, till red flames crimsoned the sky, and the yells of exultant savages sounded across the snow and the ice. Then, hopeless, the three circled south and took the trail back to the Maumee, bearing to General Harrison the fateful news that General Winchester's army was no more.

This much Jack knew and told. He could not know, what the world has since learned, that Winchester, waking to the yells of the foe as they hurled themselves upon his defenseless camp, tried

too late to join his sleeping soldiers and was captured by the Indians and taken before General Proctor. He could not know that Winchester, overborne by Proctor's threat that he feared he would not be able to restrain the fury of his savages if the Americans continued to resist, thrice sent an order of surrender to Major Madison and the men who were bravely holding out behind a barricade of garden pickets. He could not know that at the third order Madison had surrendered on pledges of protection from Proctor himself—pledges that the British general promptly forgot, abandoning the wounded and the dying to the vengeance of his savage allies—abandoning more than three hundred men, unarmed and defenseless, to be tomahawked in cold blood or to be burned alive in the building that had been hurriedly transformed into a hospital. He could not know that six hundred more had been carried away as prisoners, and that of the thousand jubilant men who had thought to march on Amherstburg and Detroit on the morrow only thirty-three escaped.

CHAPTER XXII

BEFORE Jack again approached Fort Malden six months had passed away—six months of winter, of budding spring, of golden summer. When General Winchester's army perished winter was nearing its end; when at last the tide of war changed and began to flow northward summer had died on a bed of scarlet and gold and autumn winds were driving the rustling leaves through the whispering woods.

During those six months even Jack, desperate as he was, had not dared to run the cordon of foes that lay between him and his desires. Not till Perry had swept the British from Lake Erie and Harrison sailed with five thousand men for Canada could he once more set about his quest.

First of all Americans Jack sprang upon the Canadian shore at almost the very spot where he had landed from the ice so many months before. But he was too late. Fort Malden was in ruins; British and savages had together fled; and Alagwa had gone. Half-mad with anxiety, he sought and gained permission to scout in front of the army, which was advancing swiftly, driving the foe before it. Now or never he must find his bride.

His chance came when, advancing up the Thames

River with some of Perry's sailors, he captured a bateau manned by a captain and half a dozen Canadian dragoons. Half an hour later, clad in the captain's uniform, he went forward into the darkening night, determined to ascertain the position and defenses of the enemy, to learn whether they meant to fight or fly, and to find Alagwa.

He went alone; Rogers was lying wounded at the encampment at the mouth of the Portage River, where he was being nursed by Fantine. Cato he refused to take.

The night was made for scouting. Close to the ground a light breeze whispered, and high overhead a wrack of clouds drove furiously across the sky. Through the gaps in the flying scud huge stars blazed down, casting an intermittent light that enabled Jack to keep his course without revealing his movements to possible enemies. Hour after hour he went on, slowly, not knowing where he would chance upon the foe. He did not intend to try to creep upon them unseen. He intended to walk in upon them boldly, as one who had a right to be present, trusting for safety to his disguise and to the inevitable confusion of the retreat that would make it good. But he wished to choose his own time for appearing and not to blunder on the enemy's camp unawares.

The path that he was following was broad and

soggy. It had been driven straight through crushed bushes that were slowly straightening themselves and over broken and torn brambles. Spruce and hemlock overhung the path, brushing his face with long spicy needles. Beyond, on either side, rattled the bare canes of the underbrush, rubbing together their thousand branches, bark against bark. Far away an owl called, and once, high overhead, Jack heard the honk, honk of wild geese speeding southward through the upper reaches of the air.

Well he knew that his errand was desperate, more desperate than had been his venture into Amherstburg six months before. If detected he could expect no mercy. From time immemorial even civilized foes had punished spies with death. What doom then could he expect from savages who had been beaten and broken, whose ranks had been depleted, whose villages had been burned, whose allies (on whom they had relied to protect them from the consequences of their rebellion) were in full retreat? Jack knew well the fiery death he faced. But he knew, too, that if he did not find Alagwa that night he would probably never find her.

Abruptly the underbrush ended and he came out into a park-like open space that stretched far into the distance. On the right the gleam of water showed where the Thames wandered sluggishly to Lake St. Clair. Cautiously he followed it till his road forked. One branch, broad and deep, trampled

and showing marks of heavy wheels, ran on up the river; the other, marked only by trampled grass, turned off to the left. Jack took the second, for he was looking for the Indians rather than for the British. He followed it through a belt of swamp, in which he sank nearly to the knees, then came out upon a second clearing, across which, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, he saw a light flashing close to the ground.

With tightening pulses he advanced. Soon he saw leaping flames, crisscrossed by the black branches of the trees. Then they vanished, but their glow on the overreaching trees persisted, showing that they had been merely obscured and not extinguished. A few yards farther, and the screen that had cut off the light resolved itself into men thickly ranked. Jack knew that Indians, most of all Indians upon the warpath, build only tiny fires for cooking, for warmth, or for company; for council alone did they build great fires like this. Half by luck and half by effort he had found his way to the spot he most desired—to the council fire of the savages.

Now or never. Boldly he strode forward, like one who expects no challenge. The clearing ended, giving way to undergrowth, beyond which rose thicker forest. The ground underfoot again grew spongy and he knew he was entering a second swamp. A guard of Indians, squatting at the edge

of what was evidently the camp, stared at him as he passed but made no move to stay him. Further on, here and there, a warrior glanced at him carelessly. Jack did not heed them; he well knew that to hesitate would be fatal; deliberately he advanced to the ring of savages and pushed his way through them.

Within, a ring of sitting men—redcoats and red men—were ranged in an ellipse in whose center burned the fire that he had seen from afar off. At one end, a little in advance of the line, sat an Indian clad in the red coat and shoulder straps of a British officer. Jack recognized him instantly as the chief who had visited him upon the far-away Tallapoosa and realized that he must be Tecumseh himself—Tecumseh, who had been made a major-general by the British king. At the other end of the ellipse, also in advance of the line, sat a British officer, evidently of high rank. Jack guessed that he was General Proctor. Round the circuit of the ellipse were ranged officers wearing the uniforms of the British and of the Canadian militia, interspersed with Indians, sachems of many tribes—Pottawatomies, Shawnees, Miamis, and others—representatives of the nations that the British had roused to murder and massacre. Only the Wyandottes were absent; foreseeing the vengeance that was about to fall, they had that morning fled and offered their services to General Harrison, only to be sent to the rear with the curt announcement

that Americans did not enlist savages in warfare against white men.

Close to Jack a gap showed in the circuit of the ellipse. He stepped forward deliberately and seated himself in it.

No one said him nay. All who noticed him seemed to take him at his own appraisal. His uniform was a passport, and doubtless none dreamed that an enemy would dare to so beard death in his very lair. None challenged him, and when he looked about him no suspicious eyes burned into his.

In the middle of the cleared space blazed the fire, its dancing flames flickering on the bare overhanging boughs and on the ghastly painted faces of the savages. At one side of it rose a cross, from whose arms hung the creamy-white bodies of two dogs bound in ribbons of white and scarlet. They bore no scar; so deftly had they been strangled that not a single hair had been disturbed. At the other side of the fire a warrior painted like death, beat a drum monotonously, *tump-a-tump, tump-a-tump*.

Into the ellipse a stately figure abruptly advanced. He faced the fire and the cross and raised his hands. At the sign two young warriors slipped out of the circle of braves and lifted down the dogs from the cross and held them out. The priest received them with reverence and laid them on the fire.

For an instant the smell of burning hair filled the glades; then it was swallowed up in the stronger

odor of the dried herbs which the priest sprinkled upon the flames.

Then he began to chant, and the encircling braves took up the refrain, rolling it skyward till the bare branches overhead quivered and the water quaked among the mosskegs of the swamp.

Our forefathers made the rule,
And they said: Here shall we kindle a council fire;
Here at the forest's edge, here we will unite with each
other,
Here we will grow strong.

We are losing our great men. Into the earth
They are borne; also our warriors;
Also our women, and our grandchildren as well;
So that in the midst of blood
We are sitting. Now therefore, we say,
Unite, wash the blood stains from our seat,
So that we may be for a time strong and overruling.

The chant died away. The priest disappeared. The chieftain whom Jack had guessed was Tecumseh arose and strode forward till he stood close above the embers of the dying fire. Round about the circle his fierce eyes swept; for an instant they rested on Jack's face, lighting up, perhaps with recognition; then they swept on till they met those of the British general.

"We meet here between the camps of the red-coats and the red men," he said. "We meet to talk

of what has been and of what is to be. Many moons ago the great white king across the sea sent word to us to lift the hatchet and to strike the Americans. He sent us word that he would never desert us; that he would give us back our ancient lands; that he would not make peace and abandon us to the vengeance of the Seventeen Fires. We dug up the hatchet. We fought long and hard. Again and again we won for the great king victories that without us would have been defeats. In every struggle we bore the sweat of the fight. When the Long Knives came to Fort Malden we wished to strike them and send them howling back. But the white chief said no, and we obeyed. Again and again he forced us to retreat, always against our will. Now he wishes to retreat once more. I ask him if this is not true."

General Proctor did not rise. He looked sullen and careworn. "We must retreat," he declared, irritably. "The Americans outnumber us. We can not stand against them here."

"And what of the red men?" Tecumseh's tones grew chill. "Our villages have gone up in smoke. Our women and children hide in the forests. Winter is coming on quickly. We can not take to the waters like fish, nor live in the forests like wolves, nor hide in the mud of the swamps like snakes. Either we must meet the Long Knives and drive them back or make peace with them and save what

is left to us. The white chief shall not retreat."

General Proctor shrugged his shoulders. "The white chief must retreat. Later——"

"There will be no later. The white chief shall not live to retreat. Either he must fight the Americans or he must fight Tecumseh and his men. The scalps of the white chief and his soldiers are still upon their heads. Let him look to it that tomorrow they are not carried as an offering to the chief of the Seventeen Fires."

Proctor sprang to his feet. He was shaking from head to foot, but whether from anger or from fear Jack could not tell. Several times he tried to speak and each time his voice failed. At last the words came. "Does not my red brother know why we retreated?" he cried. "Does he not know that it was because our red allies melted away from us, leaving us outnumbered by the men of the Seventeen Fires. Even while I speak other warriors are slipping away in the night to make peace with the Americans. The servants of the great king are brave and strong. But they are too few to fight alone. If my red brother can hold his men, we need not retreat farther. We will meet the Americans and drive them back as we have driven them so often before. Let my brother speak."

Tecumseh bowed. "My brother is wrong," he declared. "The red men have not deserted. Nearly all of them are here, ready to fight. It is the

white men who would retreat. If my brother will fight, the red men will do their part. I offer him my hand upon it." He stepped forward and held out his hand.

General Proctor took it. "It is well," he said. "Tomorrow we will fight. Now break up the council."

Tecumseh waved his hand. The warrior at the witch-drum began to beat, tump-a-tump, tump-a-tump. From the crowding braves rose a chant, low at first, but swiftly gaining volume.

Look down, oh! gods, look upon us! We gaze afar on your dwelling.

Look down while here we are standing, look down upon us, ye mighty!

Ye thunder gods, now behold us!

Ye lightning gods, now behold us!

Ye that bring life, now behold us!

Ye that bring death, now behold us!

Aid us and help us. For we fight for thee.

Loud and wild swelled the chant, the ritual of the tribesmen. Then it slowly died away. The ranks of standing warriors dissolved and vanished. The white men marched away, General Proctor at their head. Jack rose to follow, but as he did so his arms were grasped on either side and he was held powerless. "White man stop," muttered a gutteral voice in his ear. "Tecumseh speak with him."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE council had sat long. When it rose the sky was pink with dawn, and the velvety black pall that had edged the clearing had changed into ranked trees and underbrush. The swampy floor beneath lay dull, save where some lost pool gleamed suddenly silver. Azure mists curled softly upward. To the east, beyond the edge of the woods, the broad meadow glittered with the sparkling dew-jewels left by the parting night. Far to the left a gleam of broken silver showed where the Thames river rolled.

The spot, as Tecumseh had said, was between the Indian and the British lines. It lay just behind the apex of an obtuse angle, one leg of which ran along the edge of a fringe of beech trees wherein the British were entrenched. The other leg bordered the narrow marsh where the Indians waited. Neither woods nor swamp were deep nor dense. Behind them the light gleamed through glades that gave upon the open country.

Jack made no attempt to escape. He knew it would be useless. Besides, he was minded to play the game out. He had come for his wife, and, now that day had come, he could not hope to find her save by Tecumseh's aid. This he determined to in-

voke; and this, in spite of the deadly peril, he welcomed the chance to invoke. After all, he had come to Ohio by Tecumseh's invitation. He had some rights which even a savage must respect. Almost eagerly he stepped toward the place where Tecumseh waited.

Abruptly the red chief raised his hand and the iron arms of the two braves caught Jack and dragged him back. At another gesture they stepped before him, screening him from the sight of an officer, clad in the red coat of the British, who was striding into the circle.

Swiftly the officer came on, and Jack saw that he was Brito Telfair. Close to Tecumseh he halted, and without salutation or formality he spoke.

"Is Tecumseh a coward that he needs the help of squaws?" he demanded, hotly. "Will he keep the daughter of Delaroche here during the battle? Or will he send her away?"

Tecumseh's face darkened. His hand sprang to the hatchet at his belt. If Brito saw it, he did not heed.

"In an hour a wagon with wounded starts to the rear," he said. "Send the girl with it. If we win today you can find her again and protect her. If we lose she will be safe. Send her away, I beg of you."

Abruptly the man's voice broke. "You needn't fear me," he said. "I can't leave here, and you

know it. But—but a battle is no place for a woman! Send her where she will be safe."

Tecumseh's lips moved. "I will consider," he promised. "Go now and return within an hour. Perhaps I will let the Star maiden go."

Brito nodded and turned away. As he went Jack felt the iron grip of the braves tighten upon his arms, forcing him forward.

He went willingly enough. He had learned that Alagwa was there, in the camp, and he swore to himself that not Tecumseh nor Brito nor all the devils from hell should prevent his reaching her.

Coolly he faced the red chieftain. "The great chief came to me far in the south," he said, deliberately. "He called me and I came a long trail to meet him. He did not wait for me, and I have followed him here to receive from him the Star maiden, my kinswoman, the daughter of Delarache. Will the great chief send for her?"

Long Tecumseh stared the young man in the face. At last his lips moved. "The young white chief is brave," he said.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. He had spoken as he did in the hope of startling his captor. He had no intention of pushing the pretense too far. "The white chief seeks his wife," he said, deliberately. "He believes she is in Tecumseh's camp. He comes to demand her."

Tecumseh's face grew even grimmer. "Does the

white chief come for that alone?" he asked. "Or does he come to spy out the camp of his foes? Make answer, Te-pwe, he who speaks true."

Jack looked the chief in the eyes. He knew that deception was useless and he was in no mood to try it. "Tecumseh may judge for himself," he said. "Let the great chief do with me as he will. But first let him tell me whether my wife is with him and whether she is safe."

Tecumseh's brows went up. "Why need the white chief seek his wife," he demanded. "What wrong has he done her that she has fled from him?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "I have done her no wrong," he said. "Why she has left me I do not know. I was ill and when I recovered she had gone with emissaries sent by Tecumseh. Perhaps she went because he sent for her. Perhaps she went because her ears were filled with lies. Much I have guessed but little do I know. Perhaps the great chief knows better than I why she went."

Tecumseh did not answer at once. His fierce eyes bored into Jack's as though they would read the young man's soul. Jack thought his expression was softer, but when he spoke his voice was as chill as ever.

"Ten years and more ago," he said, "when the chief Delaroché lay dying I gave him my word that if the need ever came I would put his daughter in the care of his kinsmen in the far south and not in

that of his English kinsmen. Years went by and the call came. The chief Brito demanded her. He was a redcoat chief, an ally of Tecumseh, and you were an enemy. He was a strong man and a warrior and you were a boy. Had it not been for my word to my friend I would have given her to him gladly. But the word spoken to the dead comes not back. Therefore I sought you out and bade you come for the girl. I waited long, but you did not come. Once more I tried to keep my word to my friend. I sent the girl south, into your lines. I thought she would find you and she did. For days she travelled with you. I had kept my word to my dead friend."

The day was brightening fast. The sky had grown brilliant with pink, and scarlet, and saffron. The sun thrust himself above the rim of the world and sent long lances of light shimmering through the damp air. The trees burned red against the horizon; the wet underbrush glistened like precious stones.

Tecumseh's voice changed. For the moment it had grown softer, but now it grew chill as death. "Then suddenly," he said, "she came back to me. She thought that I had sent for her. I had not. Those who told her so were liars bought by the gold of Brito. Nevertheless I had kept my word and I was free to give her where I would. Gladly would I have given her to Brito. But she said she was your wife, wedded to you by the white man's law. She

said she would die before she would go to Brito. She begged me to protect her.

“I did protect her. I did not understand. So I protected her until I could understand. She had not left you merely because she thought I had sent for her. Do I not know her and her sex? She loved you and she would not have left you at my call. A thousand times I might have called and she would not have come. Some other cause she had. What was it?”

Jack shook his head. “I do not know,” he said. “Some talk there was about a letter that came to me at the instant of my marriage. I know nothing of it. I do not even remember that it came. When I fell, stricken by my old wound, I dropped it and an enemy of mine picked it up and read something from it. I do not know what it was—what it could have been. I do not even know that Alagwa heard it. I speak of it only because I know of no other cause. Has she not told you why she left?”

“She has told me nothing. She denied that you had wronged her. She swore that your heart was good toward her. But I did not believe her. When a woman loves she will go down to the gates of hell to bring up lies to shield her beloved. I did not believe her. But she was the daughter of my friend and to me it fell to right her wrongs, to do justice on her foes. I would not give her to the redcoat chief so long as you lived. I would not slay un-

justly. Therefore I gave orders to take you alive that I might question you. Others also I sought to capture, learning little by little what part they had in my daughter's wrongs. One by one I have gathered up the threads and woven them into the bow-string of my vengeance. At the last you have come into my hand like a bird to a trap. Now, all is ready. Tomorrow may be Tecumseh's last on earth. But tonight he has power and will do justice."

The speaker gestured and a warrior who stood by handed a blanket to Jack. "Wrap yourself," ordered the chief, "and sit beside the fire. Hide your face and speak not till I give you leave."

Greatly wondering, Jack obeyed. Nothing that Tecumseh said gave him hope, though the fact that the chief had said anything at all carried some little comfort. Very clearly Tecumseh would have been glad to give Alagwa to Brito, and very clearly he had only to take Jack's forfeited life to make it easy to carry out his wishes. On the other hand if he meant to kill he could do so with fewer words. With mingled hope and fear the American waited.

The crackling of brush beneath a hurrying tread came to his ears and he looked up.

Through the woods a slim, young girl was coming swiftly. A moment more and Alagwa stepped into the circle of the clearing and bowed before the great chief. "My father has sent for me," she said. "I have come."

Jack's heart beat fiercely within him. This was not his comrade of the trails nor was it she whom he had seen for a few brief moments on that eventful night eight months before. Gone were the man-nish garments in which he had best known her. Gone also was the white woman's dress in which she had looked so fair. In their place she wore the doeskin garb of an Indian maid, draped about the shoulders with a blanket. The strained look of anxiety had gone from her eyes, giving place to a sorrow too deep for words. Jack's heart throbbed with desire to leap to his feet and catch her in his arms. But, mindful of Tecumseh's words, he waited.

The great chief did not delay. "A year ago," he said, "Alagwa came to Tecumseh, leaving the American chief to whom he had sent her. Tecumseh would have given her to his ally Brito. But she swore that she was married and that she loved her husband. Tecumseh would not take back his gift to the American chief unless it were flung in his teeth. Alagwa would tell him nothing. Therefore he has found out for himself. Little by little he has learned all her story. Tonight he is ready to do justice. Daughter of Delaroche! Tecumseh's hatchet lies beneath your hand to strike whom you will. The young white chief is in his power. Shall he slay him?"

The girl's face whitened. She took a step back-

ward, catching at her heart. "Jack!" she whispered. "Jack! He is here?"

"He is here. What shall Tecumseh do with him? Shall he send him to the stake?"

The girl's lips parted; her eyes widened with horror. Then she dropped upon her knees at Tecumseh's feet. "No! No!" she gasped. "Oh! God! Not that! Tecumseh will not, shall not, do that. If ever Tecumseh loved Alagwa let him hear her prayer. Let the young white chief go and send Alagwa to the stake in his place."

"But he wronged you."

"He wronged me not. He was ever good and kind. He wronged me not." The words were a wail. "Believe me, great chief!"

Relentlessly Tecumseh faced her down. "Why then did you leave him?" he demanded.

"Because he loved me not. He never pretended to love me. He married me to save my good name. I—I—" The girl gasped, then went proudly on—"I loved him and I thought his heart was free. So I married him. Then at the moment came a letter from his home by the far southern seas. He read it, his eyes widened with horror, and he fell senseless. As I bent over him a man standing near caught up the letter and read from it that the maid he had loved was free and was calling for him. Then I knew why he looked at me as he did. He did not mean to do it. He was too good, too kind, too

noble. He would never have looked at me so again. But I had learned the truth. He had no place for me in his life or his heart. The surgeon at the fort said he would soon recover. I thought you had sent for me. So I left him to come to you. Nothing else was left. But he did me no wrong. He did me no wrong. He did me no wrong—" The girl's voice died away in inarticulate murmurs.

The woods had grown very still. The dead leaves rustled along the ground and the saplings murmured as they trembled in the caress of the vagrant breeze. But no man moved or spoke.

Crouching upon the ground Alagwa waited, looking up at Tecumseh with beseeching eyes.

Jack groaned as he watched the anguish that marred the exquisite oval of her face, stealing the color from her cheeks and leaving them pallid against the brown background of the woods. But he was very sure that Tecumseh was not acting without a cause, and he dared not speak lest he should spoil some well-laid plan.

Slowly Tecumseh spoke. "Alagwa knew not the writing of the white man," he said. "Lately she has learned it, but then she knew it not. How knows she that the man read with a true tongue? How knows she that he did not lie? Was he so great a friend of hers?"

Alagwa sprang to her feet. Her hands tightened till the knuckles gleamed white in the morning light.

"Friend!" she gasped. "He was no friend. He was an enemy. It was he who murdered Wil-wiloway." She paused; then—"Did—did he lie? Oh! God! Did he lie?"

"Perhaps!" Tecumseh pointed to a place on his left. "Let my daughter sit beside me and hide her face in her blanket and keep silence till Tecumseh bids her speak."

Alagwa sat down. As she did so her eyes fell on the draped figure at the great chief's right. From its folds two eyes gleamed at her, signalling a message of comfort and of love. Telepathy was far in the future—its very name was yet unborn—but the girl read the message and was comforted.

Then she straightened up with a gasp. Williams, under guard, had come through the woods and stood before the great chief. Jack remembered that he had been missing since the massacre at the River Raisin.

The man's face was drawn and pale. Clearly, his captivity had not been light. Round him he glanced with quick, furtive eyes, seeking hope and finding none.

Long Tecumseh stared him in the eyes. At last he stretched out his hand, holding a soiled and deeply creased letter. "This was taken from you when you were captured," he said. "Read it aloud. And take care you read it true."

Williams's eyes narrowed. Despite the chilliness

of the dawn, beads of perspiration crept out upon his forehead. Furtively he looked around him, as if fearing to see some accuser. Then he took the letter and stared at it.

"Read!" thundered the chieftain. "Read! And read true!"

Williams moistened his dry lips. At last he spoke. "I don't know how to read," he mumbled.

Jack leaned forward, every nerve tense. He did not need to be told that the letter was the one he had lost, the one from which Williams had read the words that had sent his bride of an hour fleeing into the night. Some disclosure was coming; he read it in the trader's frightened eyes and in Tecumseh's deadly mien. What would it be? His blood ran cold as he waited.

Chill as death came the great chief's voice. "Surely the white man errs," he said. "A year ago he read from this very letter a message from a maid dwelling in the far south."

Williams's courage deserted him. His whole figure seemed to crumple. Clearly he remembered that the Shawnees were Alagwa's friends. "I didn't read nothin'," he whined. "I was only jokin'. That fellow Jack done me a dirty trick and he hit me when I wasn't lookin' and I wanted to get even. I reckoned he had a sweetheart down south and I made up something about her and let on that it was in the letter. I didn't mean no harm. I reckoned

he'd get well and read the letter and make it all right with the girl. How was I to know she'd run off right away?"

"You cur!" Heedless of Tecumseh's possible wrath Jack hurled himself at the trader. But before his gripping fingers could fasten upon the other's throat the two braves stepped between, forcing him backward. A second later Alagwa slipped to his side and clasped his hand in hers.

Absorbed in the scene none saw Brito Telfair come through the woods to the edge of the clearing and stand there, watching the scene with gleaming eyes.

Meanwhile Tecumseh was speaking. "Tecumseh does not kill prisoners," he said. "He challenges any white man to say that he has ever taken vengeance on the helpless. He has spared even snakes in the grass, lying and treacherous. But, like the chiefs of all nations, Tecumseh punishes murder." He turned to Williams. "You dog," he grated. "A year ago you murdered Wilwiloway, friend of Tecumseh. You shot him down without cause, in cold blood, when he was making the peace sign. For that I have doomed you. I have let you live only that you might say what you have said today. Now you die." He waved his hand to the guards. "Take him away," he ordered. "Let his end be swift."

The guard closed in, but the doomed man flung

himself at Jack's feet. "For God's sake don't let them kill me!" he screamed. "For God's sake!" He clutched at Jack's feet. "Here's your letter," he jabbered, forcing it into the other's hand. "You can show it to her and make everything right. But for God's sake save me. You're a white man, not an Injun. Save me! Don't let these devils murder me."

Jack's fury died. The indefinable bond between white and white, the bond that has lifted the race above all other races of the world, tugged at him. After all, Williams was a white man; murderer though he was, he was a white man. Forgetful that he too was a prisoner, a detected spy, Jack turned to the chief.

But before he could speak Tecumseh raised his hand. "Tecumseh does justice," he said. "He does it both to his foes and to his friends. The wrong this man did to Alagwa has been healed. But the wrong he did to Wilwiloway has not been paid. He is a murderer; he will die for it." He waved his hand. "Take him away," he ordered.

The guards plucked Williams from the ground and marched away with him.

Then Brito came forward, jauntily. He glanced at Jack, and triumph shone in his eyes.

"Great is Tecumseh's justice," he said. "Confidently I appeal to it."

Not a muscle in the chief's face changed. "Let

the servant of the white king speak," he directed, calmly.

Brito's eyes grew steely. "The hour that Tecumseh fixed has passed," he said. "I came back to receive his word. I find with him an American dog, dressed in the coat of the King's soldiers. Either he comes as a spy, whose life is forfeit, or he comes to offer Tecumseh the price of treachery, to buy him to desert the King and join the Americans. Which is it? If he comes as a spy I demand in the King's name that Tecumseh surrender him to me to be dealt with as a spy. If he comes to buy Tecumseh let the red chief declare himself now."

Brito spoke boldly. Whatever his faults he was no coward. Unflinchingly he gazed into Tecumseh's eyes.

Jack's heart sank. Every word that Brito said was true. By all the laws of war his life was forfeit. If the Englishman had not appeared Tecumseh might have spared him for Alagwa's sake. But would he dare to spare him now and let himself rest under the imputation of treachery that Brito had hurled into his teeth? Jack doubted it greatly. But he strove to meet his enemy's eyes composedly and not to betray the terror with which he waited.

He had not long to wait. Deliberately the red chief ignored Brito's accusation. Coolly he answered. "Captain Telfair asks justice," he said, slowly. "He shall have it. But the American chief

shall have it also. He came to Tecumseh's camp to demand his wife. Tecumseh will not slay him or let him be slain. He has need of him. He will send him back to his own people with a message to the chief of the Seventeen Fires."

Hand in hand Jack and Alagwa waited. They spoke no words; they needed to speak none. They looked each other in the eyes and were content.

Tecumseh went on slowly. "Tecumseh kept his word once to his dead friend," he said. "He is under no pledge to give the Star maiden to the American chief again. But"—the chief paused: slowly his eyes traversed the startled group—"but he may take her himself if he dares and if he can. The Star maiden shall go now, at once, in the British chief's wagon, to the rear. There she will wait."

The chieftain paused and pointed upward to the sun, which was just climbing above the tops of the trees. Then he faced Jack.

"The day passes swiftly," he said. "Go back to your general and tell him that Tecumseh sends him greeting as one brave man to another and challenges him to combat. Tell him that the redcoats and red men are united and wait to give him battle. Tell him that—tell him what you will. You can tell him nothing but what Tecumseh wishes him to know. But tell him to hasten. Your way to the Star maiden lies across my lines. Till sunset Tecumseh

will protect her. Afterwards, you must protect her yourself. If you pass our lines you may clasp her in your arms before the sun sets. I have spoken! Go!"

Brito had listened in silence. He attempted no protest. He made no further accusation of treachery. Instead, he bowed. "I am stationed at the very center of the British part of our lines, my dear cousin," he said; "I will await you there. Fail not—or it will be I who will clasp the Star maiden in my arms this night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TECUMSEH had chosen well the ground where he had forced Proctor to stand at bay. The River Thames, running between high precipitous banks, protected his left flank, and a great marsh nearly parallel to the river protected his right. He could be reached only by a direct frontal attack, during which the Americans would be continually under fire. Midway between river and swamp was a smaller swamp, almost impassable. The only road ran close along the river; the rest of the space between swamp and river was a park-like expanse thinly set with great trees, beech, sugar maple, and oak. Beneath them the ground was bare, save where trees had fallen. Any enemy who might advance across it must infallibly have his columns broken and would yet be exposed to volley fire, against which the trees would offer little or no protection.

Beyond this park, at the edge of a thicket of beech, the British regulars were posted on a line running from the river to the smaller swamp. Their artillery was placed so as to sweep the river road. Tecumseh and his warriors held the line between the two swamps and along the front of the larger swamp, ready to pour an enfilading fire on the

American flank and to charge upon its rear the moment it pressed too far forward in its attack. One false move, one error, and the disaster of the River Raisin might be repeated. But this time a real soldier was in command.

It was long past noon when the American regiments swung out of the underbrush that had screened their movements onto the broad park-like expanse that rolled to the edge of the beech wood and the swamp where their foes waited.

Over the sun-drenched fields and through the pleasant woods they held their way, thrashing through the tall grass, crushing the underbrush beneath their columned tread. Their slanting flags, whipping in the rising breeze, revealed the stripes and the soaring stars and flaunted the regimental symbols. On the right were the regulars of the 25th infantry, one hundred and twenty strong, grim, well-drilled men who marched with a precision not found among the volunteers. In the center and on the left were the Kentucky volunteers, headed by Johnson's cavalry, burning to avenge the butchery of their kindred at the River Raisin. Above them the bayonets flashed back the sunlight.

Steadily they advanced. The distance was still too great for musketry fire, but it was lessening every instant. The British howitzers, too, were waiting, masked behind their leafy screen.

A far-off report broke the silence. A mound of

white erected itself at the end of the river road and a howitzer ball hummed along it. Along the edge of the beech wood ran the crackle of small arms. From the swamp on the left came the enfilading fire of the Indians. A private in Desha's regiment fell forward and lay upon his face, motionless. A sergeant a hundred feet away doubled up with a grunt.

Steadily the volunteers swung forward to where the westering sun shone red across the red and yellow carpet that autumn's winds had strewn. As they marched they sang, at first low, then with a swing that rose terribly to the skies:

Scalps are bought at stated prices,
Proctor pays the price in gold.
Freemen, no more bear such slaughters,
Rouse and smite the faithless foe.

Most of the victims of the River Raisin had been Kentuckians; it was meet and proper that Kentuckians should avenge them at the Thames.

Jack was far in advance of the troops. Familiar with the ground from his adventure of the night before, he knew where to look for the enemy's lines and could venture nearer to them than any other scout. He had left his horse behind, well out of danger, and had crept forward on foot, closer and closer, determined to learn in what order the British designed to meet the attack. Nearer and nearer he crept, flat on the ground, worming his way. At

last, beneath the shadow of the trees he saw the crossed white on red that marked the British soldiers. Detail after detail he noted; then, when a bugle at the rear told him that the Americans were advancing, he began to worm backward.

At his horse at last, he leaped to the saddle and drove the spurs deep, heading for the spot where the ringing bugle was sounding the advance.

General Harrison, surrounded by his staff, stood watching. "Now's the time," he muttered. "Trumpeter! Sound the——" He broke off, as a scout came dashing toward him.

It was Jack. "General!" he clamored. "They're in two lines in open order."

Harrison started. "In open order!" he cried. "You're mad."

"No! It's true! I've been within a hundred yards of them. It's true! I swear it."

Another horseman wearing the shoulder straps of a major dashed up. "General!" he cried. "They're in open order. I've just——"

"Enough!" Harrison spun around. "By God! We've got them! Mr. Telfair, tell Colonel Johnson my orders are to charge home." He swung around. "Major Wood, tell Colonel Trotter the plans have been changed. Colonel Johnson will attack on horseback and the infantry will support him. Go!"

Ten minutes later the Kentucky cavalry rode into the narrowing neck between the river and the

small swamp. As they crowded in, the space grew too small for effective manœuvres. Colonel R. H. Johnson, afterward to be elected vice-president of the United States, rode at the head of the left-hand squadron, naked saber resting against his shoulder. He noticed the constriction and called to his brother, commanding the right-hand column. "Say, Jim," he cried. "You handle the British. I'll cross the swamp and tackle Tecumseh." He turned to his men. "Column left," he ordered.

Jack, defiant of the rule that bade him rejoin General Harrison, once his message had been delivered, had followed close at Colonel Johnson's heels. Now, he sped across to those of Lieutenant-Colonel James Johnson.

"Attention!" James's voice rang above the thudding hoofs. "By troops! Right front into line. March."

The shimmering column broke up, dividing into four. "Forward! Steady! Right dress. Forward!" Quickly the orders followed.

James faced about. "Advance rifles," he ordered; and the muskets rattled as they fell into position.

The woods in front were veiled in smoke. The rattle of small arms was incessant. The screech of bullets filled the air. Here and there a man fell forward, clutching at his horse's neck. Here and

there one swayed and crashed to the ground. Over all the sunlight pulsed in bands of fire.

Coolly James's voice arose. "Hold your fire till you can see the whites of their eyes," he ordered. "Then give 'em h—l." He waved his sword. "Forward! Gallop!" he cried.

The pace quickened. The ground was becoming more open and the enemy's bullets were coming faster. But the Americans did not fire. They could not see the foe in the tangled thicket ahead of them, and they had no shots to waste.

"Form for attack! By fours! Right front into line! March!"

The columns broke up, changing, as if by magic, into a long double line of horsemen, galloping toward the smoking woods.

"Forward! Remember the Raisin! Charge!"

The trumpets sounded and from the crowding horsemen rose a yell. "Remember the Raisin;" loud and thrilling the cry echoed back from the woods. The horses sprang forward, furious with the battle clangor.

Still the Americans did not fire. Their first weapon was the running horse; against the enemy's lines they hurled him. Later they would use their muskets and the long pistols that hung at their belts.

At the front rode Johnson. Neck and neck with him rode Jack, heading for the very center of the

British line. Not for all the devils in h—l would he have fallen back an inch.

For a moment blinding smoke filled his eyes. Right and left ran the red flash of the British rifles. Then he was among the trees, plunging through a line of redcoated men, who reeled and ran, throwing down their guns as they went. "Quarter! Quarter!" The cry rang loud above the crash of falling arms.

Jack did not heed it. A second line, fringed with flames, was rising behind the first. Midway of it, through the smoke, he saw Brito's face. At it he drove. "Wait for me," he yelled.

But Brito did not wait. Before the rush of the maddened horses the second line was breaking up, dissolving into fragments. To wait was to surrender or to die, and Brito had no mind for either. Probably he did not hear Jack's challenge. Certainly he did not wait. As the line dissolved he turned and fled, bending low upon his horse's neck.

Jack glanced neither to the right nor to the left. His eyes were fixed only on his foe. For an instant the roar of battle rose around him. Rifles flashed in his face. Men struck at him with sabers and clubbed guns. Then he was out of the ruck, crashing through the autumn woods. Saplings lashed at him with stinging strokes. Low-hung branches scraped his horse's back, dragging at him. Thickets, seemingly impassable, broke before the impetus of

his rush. Then, abruptly the roar of battle died away. The flickering rifle flames vanished.

Then far to his left a second roar arose; Jack did not know it, but it was Colonel Johnson and his first squadron striking the Indian line, and it sounded the knell of the great chief, Tecumseh. Jack paid no attention to it; heart and soul alike were concentrated on the rider whose red coat he saw far ahead through the packed woods. Recklessly he spurred.

After a time the woods opened and he saw his enemy clearer. He was gaining rapidly, too rapidly. He was in no haste to bring his foe to bay. His horse, a bright bay, bred in Kentucky and brought north with Johnson's regiment, had come through the short, sharp battle without a wound and was in perfect condition, well rested, and capable both of long pursuit and of extraordinary bursts of speed when need should arise. He knew nothing of Brito's horse, except the patent fact that it was a big black that seemed to carry its heavy rider with ease, but he had little doubt that his own was better. Almost at will he could close in and sooner or later he meant to do so and to balance the long-due account between himself and Brito. But he did not know where Alagwa was. Brito did. Therefore Brito should lead him to her.

For a long time he galloped on, keeping his dis-

tance behind the fleeing Englishman, and availing himself of every bit of cover to screen himself from observation, though he had little fear that Brito would suspect his identity. He guessed, what he afterwards learned to be a fact, that nearly all the British officers who possessed horses were using them to escape; General Proctor, for instance, fled sixty-five miles without a halt. If Brito should see him he was far more likely to think him a brother officer and to halt and wait for him than to suspect that an American had dared to venture so far behind the British lines even after the destruction of the British army.

The chase went on. The sun was dropping toward the west and dusk was creeping over the brown fields and low tree-crowned sandy ridges. Already a veil of deep blue shadow lay on the land. Soon it would be night. The moon, high overhead, a pale ghost in the daylit sky, might or might not illumine the darkness. Jack shook his reins and his bay responded gloriously, cutting down by half the interval between himself and Brito's black.

Steadily the fugitive drove on. Deserted farm-houses swept by; thickets rose and passed; but he showed no signs of stopping. Anxiously Jack glanced at the darkening west. Soon he must bring the other to bay or risk losing him. Could he have judged wrong? Could Brito be merely fleeing to

save himself, careless of Alagwa? Could she be already far behind? Jack's heart sank at the thought. Should he close in and have done with it?

As he hesitated Brito turned abruptly aside, urging his horse toward the crest of a low ridge that rose to the north. An instant later he vanished into the fringe of trees that crowned it.

Jack's anxiety swelled uncontrollably. For the first time he used the spur, and the bay responded nobly, turning into the narrow wood road that Brito had followed and tearing up the slope and crashing into the fringe of trees, like a tornado. He, like his master, seemed to guess that the long chase was nearing its end.

Jack leaned forward, listening with all his ears. Sight no longer aided him and he could depend only on hearing, and this availed him little. The snapping branches, the hollow thunder of his horse's hoofs, the rustling of the night wind in the trees, the laboring breathing of his own steed, drowned all more distant sounds. Jack set his teeth hard.

Over the crest of the ridge he passed and thundered down the opposite slope. Then in a moment the woods broke sharply off, opening to right and to left, and he found himself on the edge of a wide, open space in which stood a farmhouse. Before it, just drawing his horse to a halt, was Brito.

Jack halted, reining in and leaning forward,

every nerve thrilling. Was it the place? Had Brito led him true?

A crowd of men and women came pouring from the farmhouse door. With staring eyes Jack watched, counting them as they came. Two men, five women, as many children, then—then—last of all came Alagwa.

Jack shouted aloud—a great shout that startled the sleepy birds. He had found her. His hour had come.

CHAPTER XXV

AT JACK'S shout Brito looked up. Then he, too, cried out and settled himself back in the saddle.

Slowly the two rode toward each other, pistols in hand. Between them lay the hard-trampled level of the cattle yard. The sun had dropped behind the trees; the moon had not yet gathered power; no confusing shadows offered advantage to either.

Suddenly Brito flung up his pistol and fired. Jack felt his hat torn from his head and saw it go sailing to the ground. He threw up his own pistol. Then he hesitated; Alagwa and the women and children were directly behind his foe. He dared not fire.

As he hesitated Brito flung down his useless pistol and spurred at him, saber flashing as he came. Jack reined back; his horse reared, striking with its hoofs, and Brito's black shied to the left and rushed by, Brito's blade singing harmlessly in the air as he passed.

The two men wheeled. They had changed places; Jack's back was toward the farmhouse. Again he raised his pistol. His finger curled about the trigger.

Brito paused and his face whitened. Then he

cried out, jeering. "Shoot, you cur!" he shrieked. "Shoot, you d—d American! Shoot an unarmed man if you dare. No Englishman would take such an advantage. This isn't war; it's a private quarrel. If you're not all cur, if there's any Tel-fair blood in your veins, throw down that pistol and fight on equal terms like a man."

Jack hesitated. Brito had had his shot and had missed. He was talking merely to save his life; his taunts merited no consideration. Jack knew well that he ought to shoot him down or take him prisoner. He knew that the men at the farmhouse were against him. Nevertheless, Brito's words bit.

He turned in his saddle. Alagwa was leaping to his side and to her he handed the pistol. "Keep those others back," he ordered swiftly. Then he turned to face his foe.

It was high time. Brito was coming straight for him. Barely he had time to spur his horse aside and avoid the shock. As he leaped he heard Brito shouting to the Canadians to shoot.

Jack wheeled. The two Canadians had gone back into the farmhouse. Now they were rushing out, muskets in hand. Then Alagwa's pistol settled on the foremost and he heard their guns crash to the ground.

Jack saw red. For the first time in his life the rage to kill seized him—a fierce, strong longing that

shook him from head to foot, a survival from the fierce, bitter primeval days when foes were personal and hate was undiluted. He snatched at his blade and drew it from the scabbard.

"You d—d cur!" he rasped. "You coward! By God! You'll pay now." Wild as he was, he was also cold as ice; in some men the two go together.

Like most gentlemen of the day Jack had learned to use the foils and even to some extent the saber. But all his training had been with buttons, where to be touched meant merely the loss of a point on the score. Never had he fought a duel or used a sword in anger, while Brito had done both. To an outsider all the odds would have seemed to be with the older man.

But Jack did not think of odds. Like many men in the moment of extreme peril, he felt supreme assurance that victory was to be his. Before him stretched the vision of long years of life and happiness with Alagwa at his side. The coming fight was a mere incident, not a catastrophe that was to whelm him and her in ruin. Eagerly he spurred forward.

The two horses crashed, rearing and biting, and over their heads the swords of the riders clashed. Neither spoke. Neither had mind to speak or even to think. Both fought grimly, terribly, well knowing that for one the end was death. Stroke and

parry, parry and stroke; hot and swift the one followed the other.

For the most part they fought at close quarters, but now and again the horses carried them apart. At one such moment Jack glimpsed at the farmhouse door and its group. The women had fled inside and were peering from the windows; the children had disappeared altogether; the two men, disarmed, stood backed against the wall, under Alagwa's pistol.

The crimson sunset had faded from the sky, but the half-moon was glowing out, changing from its daylight sheen to a silver glory that spilled like rain upon the shadowy world. By its gleam the fight went on, minute after minute.

At last Jack began to tire. His arms drooped and he began to fight on the defensive. He was scarcely twenty-one; for twenty-four hours he had not closed his eyes; for four days he had had little rest and little food; for months he had been torn with anxiety, more wearing than any exertion. Brito had suffered, too, but his stress had been national rather than personal. His muscles were older and more seasoned, his arms more sinewy. His attack showed no signs of slackening.

Suddenly his eyes gleamed. He had noted Jack's growing weakness. His tongue began to wag. "You fool!" he hissed. "I told you to keep out

of my way. This is the end. Tonight—tonight—”

He disengaged and thrust, his blade singing within a hair's breadth of Jack's throat. He thrust again and the keen edge hissed through Jack's sleeve. Again he thrust, but this time Jack met him with a parry that sent his blade wide.

But the Englishman did not pause. His onslaught became terrible. His sword became a living flame, circling, writhing, and hissing in the moonlight. Slowly he forced the American backward. For the moment no living man could have held ground against his fury.

Then suddenly, when Jack thought he could sustain no more, the attack slackened. Flesh and blood could not maintain its fury. Brito's arm flagged for a second, perhaps in order to deceive; then he thrust again, upward, for the throat. Jack, worn out, took a desperate chance. He did not parry with his blade; instead he threw up his hilt and caught Brito's point squarely upon the guard. A hair's breadth to the right or to the left and the other's sword would have pierced his throat. But that hair's breadth was not granted. Brito's blade stopped short, bent almost double, and snapped short. Brito himself swayed sideways, losing his balance for the moment. Before he could recover Jack rose in his stirrups and brought his blade down with a sweeping stroke against the bare,



JACK TELFAIR AND CAPTAIN BRITO SETTLE THEIR DISPUTE

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brown neck that for an instant lay exposed. Deep the steel cut. Beneath it Brito stiffened; his sword dropped from his hands; blood spouted from the severed veins; he swayed and toppled—dead.

Jack scarcely saw him fall. The earth swayed round him in a mighty tourbillon; moon and stars danced in the sky in bewildering convolutions; the primeval trees beside the farmhouse rocked, cutting mighty zigzags across the milky-way. Half-fainting he clung to his saddle, while beneath him the bay panted and wheezed, worn out by the stress of the fight.

Slowly the mists cleared. Out of them shone Alagwa's face, white, but glad with a great gladness. Behind her the two men, crouched against the house, their staring, terror-filled eyes glistening in the moonlight.

Jack's fingers wagged toward the muskets at their feet. "Give me those guns," he breathed.

Alagwa obeyed silently. He was in the ascendant now. He was the warrior; she the squaw, docile and obedient. Her hour would come later and she was content to wait.

The men shrank back as Jack took the guns, muttering pleas for mercy. The women came stumbling from the house, shrieking. Jack did not heed them. He fired the guns into the air; then smashed them against the corner of the house. Then he turned to Alagwa and pointed to Brito's horse.

"Come," he ordered. "The fight is done. We must go."

Silently Alagwa mounted and silently the two rode up the slope, across the moon-drenched woods upon the crest, and down the long backward trail to where the British and Indian power had been shattered.

Jack did not speak. ~~He~~ dared not. A sudden wondering panic had fallen upon him. ~~He~~ had won his bride at last. ~~He~~ had won her with his heart; he had earned her with his sword. ~~He~~ had shown her the thoughts of his heart at dawn beside Tecumseh's fire; he had shown her the work of his sword at dusk beside the farmhouse. She was his; he had only to put out his hand to claim her.

But he did not dare. Love had throned her immeasurably above him. Scarcely he dared look at her as she rode beside him in the white moonlight, swaying to the rhythm of her horse's pace, mystic, strange—no woodland boy, no "sweet, gentle lady," no Indian maid—but all of these at once, all and more, a woman, his woman, his mate, born for him, foreordained for him since the first dawn that had silvered the world. Speechless he rode on, glancing at her from sidelong eyes.

Alagwa, too, was silent, waiting. This was her hour, and she knew it. But he must tell her—tell her what she already knew. Not one sweet word of the telling would she spare him. And the worse he

boggled the telling the more she would love him. Love—woman's love—pardons all but silence.

At last Jack found his tongue. He spoke hurriedly, gaspingly, trying to hide the ferment of his soul. "The war here is over," he said. "I did not stay to see the end of the battle, but I know the British power in the west is shattered. Most of the army will go home. And we will go to Alabama. Father is waiting to welcome you. I wrote him of you and he wrote me that if I did not bring you with me I might stay away myself. You will like father. He is fierce, like yourself, and tender-hearted, too—like yourself. Ah! Yes! You will like him and you will like Alabama. Alabama! I told you once what the word meant. It's Creek: a-la-ba-ma, here we rest. There we will rest. Later we will go to France to see your inheritance—yours no more. Father writes that Napoleon has confiscated the Telfair estates. But we can spare them. Cato will go with us—father writes that the two girls he humbugged have husbands of their own and will not trouble him, and that the third—the one he is fond of—is waiting for him. Rogers and Fantine will make a match of it, I think. He says now that he likes to hear women's talk. Tecumseh—I do not know what his fate may be. But he swore he would win or leave his bones on the field today—and he did not win. I—I have read that letter; there was

nothing in it—nothing. I fainted because of my illness and not because of anything I read."

Jack's voice died. He had run through his budget of news without broaching the subject that lay so near his heart. Alagwa did not help him. Silently she waited.

The night was wearing on. The moon was sinking into the west. Its fairy sheen lingered faintly on the trees and the grass and dusty road that stretched through the dew-wet fields like a band of silver. High above, the multitudinous stars blazed in the firmament. Silence reigned; no cry of bird or beast sounded through the night; even the sound of the horses' hoofs was muffled in the soft dust. Like spirits the two rode on through the enchanted silence.

Then, in slow crescendo, the tinkle of a far-off brook blended softly into the beauty of the night, blended so softly that its music seemed the melody of tautened heart-strings. Slowly it grew till the stream glanced suddenly out, dancing in the last rays of the setting moon. Beyond it stretched an open space, floored with fallen leaves, ringed with tall saplings, silver edged, through whose leafless tops the stars shone faintly down.

The path to the ford was narrow. The two horses crowded into it, crushed their riders together, and at the touch Jack's surcharged heart

found vent. "Alagwa! Alagwa!" he cried, brokenly; and again, "Alagwa!"

The girl swayed toward him. Her eyes, wet with unshed tears, gleamed into his from beneath the dark masses of her tangled hair. Then, in a moment his arms were round her and her head lay heavy on his breast. The horses halted, bending their heads to the water that rippled about their feet.

Jack's heart kindled in the swimming darkness. His pulse beat madly in his throat. "Alagwa!" he gasped. "Alagwa! . Friend! Comrade! Wife! I love you so! I love you so!"

"And I love you!" Like a great organ note the girl's voice echoed the avowal. "Ah! But you know it. You know I left you for your own sake—for your own sake——"

Closer and closer Jack drew her. The flood-gates of his speech were broken up. Words, undreamed before, leaped to his lips. "I loved you then," he breathed. "I have loved you always. But the change from boy to man came too suddenly. I did not know. I did not understand. It took time—time and the touchstone of absence and peril and agony—to teach me that I was a fool and mad and blind." He broke off, laughing with wonder. "Fool that I was to tell you that I was fond of you! Fool to prate of friendship! Fool to match stilted periods when my every fibre was

thrilling, my every nerve quivering for you and you alone. I knew it and yet I knew it not. I did not dream that it was love that thrilled me. I did not know what love was. But now I know."

The horses raised their heads, whinnying. Slowly, high-stepping, they splashed through the lambent waters of the ford and out upon the broad bank.

Jack leaped from the saddle and held up his arms for his bride. "We are far from camp," he said, "and it is dangerous to approach it from this direction in the darkness. The horses are tired; the night is mild—and far spent. Come, dear! Come! a-la-ba-ma; here we rest."

FINIS

